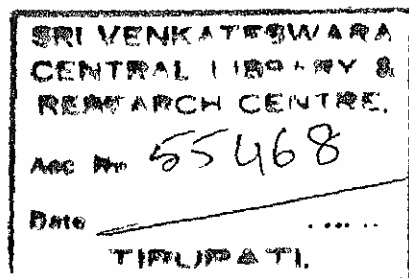


The Impact of Rāmānuja's Teaching on Life and Conditions in Society

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SUNDEEP PRAKASHAN
DELHI



First Published : 1990

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ISBN—81-85067-46-5

*Published by : Ashish Singhal for SUNDEEP PRAKASHAN
B-3/53 Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110 052
Phone : 7112866*

*Printed by : Lakhera Printing Press, Old Maujpur
Delhi-110 053.*

*Dedicated with affection to my beloved dynamic
maternal uncle Sriman V. T. Tirunarayaṇa Iyengar
Prof. of Sanskrit and Philosophy (Retd.)
of the Mysore University, Mysore*

Acknowledgement

The title of the present work was suggested to me by Dr. Sheikali, the present Vice-Chancellor of Mangalore University, Mangalore, when he was the Head of the Post-Graduate Studies and Research in History, Manasagangothri, Mysore. Subsequently Dr. A.V. Venkata Ratnam, Professor and Head of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in the Department of History was kind enough to be my guide. He has been of immense help to me in the preparation of the work. He evinced keen interest at every stage and offered valuable suggestions for which I am grateful. I have received valuable help from Sri V.T. Tirunarayana Iyengar, Professor of Sanskrit (retired) of the University of Mysore. I wish to record my indebtedness to him.

I am thankful to the authorities of the Oriental-Research Institute, Mysore, The University Library, Institute of Kannada Studies and Chief Epigraphic Office, Government of India, Mysore, who readily made available the books I needed for consultation.

I am indebted to them for the help. I am grateful to S.S. Raghavachar, Professor of Philosophy (retired) University of Mysore, Dr. B.R. Gopal, Reader in South Indian Studies, Institute of Kannada Studies, University of Mysore, Dr. K.S. Shivanna, Reader in Post-Graduate Department of History and Dr. M.B. Rajamani, Reader in Social Change, Centre of Advanced Studies of Research in Post-Graduate Department of History, University of Mysore, for their valuable suggestions. I thank Mr. K.S. Ramachander, typist for the neat work he has done in time.

—G. Lakshamma

Preface

This work is an attempt to study Sri Rāmānuja's teachings and their impact on various aspects of Social life in India not only during his life time but also afterwards and right down to the present days. Many works have been written on Śrī Rāmānuja with a view to analyse his philosophy. On the other hand this work is based on an historical approach and as such seeks to analyse the relevance of Śrī Rāmānuja's teachings in the socio-economic, cultural and administrative fields.

Śrī Rāmānuja was not a 'revolutionary' in the sense in which that world is understood today. He was no doubt a revolutionary in the context of the times in which he lived; and, without rejecting tradition, he tried to accommodate suitable changes wherever necessary for the integrated growth of society. He made a sincere attempt to conserve and adopt the long established tradition and made it meaningful to our existence. The concept of interdependence rather than conflict was the central idea of his philosophy and teachings.

Śrī Rāmānuja can in one sense be termed as a 'Socialist-philosopher' who based his concept of the distribution of material things in socio-economic life on the firm faith in God. It is not the Godless socialism of modern days, but a God-based socialism appealing to each and every one. Integration of society was his concern rather than the disruption of the existing system and its replacement by a new one. In this sense he advocated evolutionary development of man and society. This is the thrust of the present study.

The title of the work on hand was suggested to me by Dr. B. Sheikh Ali, the present Vice-Chancellor of Goa University, Goa, when he was the head of the Department of Studies in History, Manasagangotri, Mysore. He was my research guide till he took up the post of Vice-Chancellor of Mangalore University, Mangalore. Subsequently Dr. A.V. Venkataratnam, former Chairman, Department of Studies in History, Manasagangotri, Mysore, was kind enough to guide me in my research work. They have been of immense help to me in the preparation of the work and evinced keen interest by offering valuable suggestions at every stage. I am highly grateful to

both of them. Likewise I have received very valuable help and guidance from Sri V.T. Thirunarayana Iyengar, former Prof. of Sanskrit and Philosophy in the University of Mysore and an outstanding scholar on Śrī Rāmānuja *Siddhantiha* and I am very happy to record my immense indebtedness to him. My mother Smt. Ranganayaki Ammal was a source of inspiration and guidance particularly when I wanted to understand the inner meanings of *prabhandha* literature which is in Tamil language. I also record my sincere gratitude to her. I thank my brother Prof. M.G. Srinivasan, Prof. of Civil Engineering, Jnana Bharati, Bangalore who went through the manuscripts and gave some valuable suggestions to improve it. My colleague Dr. K.S. Shivanna, Reader, Department of Studies in History, Manasagangotri, Mysore, was helpful at every stage in discussing the historical and interpretative aspects concerning the present work and I thank him for his valuable advise. I also express my thanks to all my colleagues for their encouragement.

In the publication of the present work I received immense help and guidance from Prof. (Dr.) T.V. Venkatachala Sastry, Institute of Kannada Studies, Manasagangotri, Mysore, Dr. K.V. Ramesh, Director of Epigraphy, Office of the Director (Epigraphy), Government of India, Mysore and Dr. S.P. Tiwari, Deputy Superintending Epigraphist in the above institution, but for whose timely help, active support, liberal gesture and prompt action, this work would not have seen the light of day and I am certainly most grateful to them.

Sri Tirupati Devastbanam Publication Committee generously offered me financial assistance to publish this work and without their financial support this work could not have been published. I acknowledge my grateful thanks to the Publication Committee. Finally I record my thanks to Shri Ashish Singhal proprietor of Sundeeep Prakashan, Delhi for having brought the work on the time in an attractive way.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Nature and Scope

This work is an attempt to study Rāmānuja's contribution to society. Rāmānuja has been regarded as a great socio-religious reformer. The philosophy of Rāmānuja has come to be known as *Ubhayavedanta*, the twin system of Vedāntic thought. Two aspects are recognised in this System. The first is the personal, the 'Theistic approach to the Absolute' in search of wisdom. The other is the behaviour in life with the possession of wisdom. That is the 'Socialistic aspect of Absolutism.' The two aspects are thus inseparable.

We are interested in understanding the socialistic aspect which is to regulate the mode of life and not to miss the benefits of life. In this connection, Rāmānuja has been hailed by his disciple Sudarśana, the author of the *Śruti-prakāśika*, as *Paramayogin*—the greatest associate capable of controlling the maladies pertaining to society 'Antar-Jvara' the lurking fever. To quote Sudarśana¹.

*"Tasmai Rāmānujāryaya
namaḥ paramayogine
yaḥ-śruti-smṛti-sūtraṇam
antar-jvaram, asisamai".*

I bow to the exalted Rāmānuja, the greatest healer (associate of the Lord) who brought down the fever (of discrepancy) lurking in the *Vedas* (the Vedic projection), the *Smṛtis* (the ritual delineation) and the *Sūtras* (aphorisms, i.e., Vedic thought in a condensed form)".

We are impressed when we notice that the way of Rāmānuja was to control social disorder by keeping the mind above polluting influence. In his works a few concepts emerge as capable of holding society together in a harmonious way. They are *Aprithak-Siddhi* (inseparable existence), *Samanvaya* (the supreme pursuit), *Śarīrāt-mabhāva* (the body-mind kinship) and *Ananyatva* (non co-ordinate status). These philosophic terms enabled Rāmānuja to conceive of society as

a body and an organism and develop the *Vedānta* (the final phase of wisdom) philosophy of benefit not only to the student but also to his fellow beings. These four concepts formed the four cardinal principles of social structure and well-being.

Being a *Vaidika* (believer of the *Vedas* and follower of the Vedic style of living) and a *Sanyasin* (ascetic of the Vedic order, Rāmānuja could not confine his study exclusively to society to the exclusion of the element which founded, organised and evolved the society having full sway over the participants covered by society.

To stress the spiritual nature is the concern of philosophy, but to exclude it totally, while dealing with Rāmānuja's association with society, is to miss his contribution.

The present work has a two-fold view. The first is the facility offered to stave off starvation and duress and to eliminate bitterness among people. The second is to educate people to an awareness of healthy existence in community life. It involves an understanding of personal responsibility, capacity, opportunity and dignity along the humility. This awareness is the birthright of every member and the basis of living in peace in the world. This aspect of awakening social consciousness in its integrity is the burden of the leading members of society who indulge in service and who have disposition towards active behaviour with no taint of personal elevation and aggrandisement in view. In order to appreciate Rāmānuja's contribution it is necessary to study his struggle against adversity and to discuss his contribution to society.

The philosophic references in this work may not be looked upon as a treatise on the philosophy of Rāmānuja. They would only serve as a background to have a clear view of society as it ought to be. As a leading member of society, Rāmānuja tried to provide society with the material needs with an instruction that the material need should not be the only pursuit in life to the exclusion of the other unavoidable aspects of helping the depressed to emerge healthy and happy. To the truly enlightened mind, life in this world is not the scene of grief and despair compelling an escape. It is an occasion to accept an active role with cheer and robustness, though the life-stream may be checked by the tide of time.

It is known that the treatment of the subject does not conform to the modern method of approach to socialism. Rāmānuja did not contribute to the comfort of society as it drifted from one stage to another by withdrawing the restraints placed on its members. He rather devised a curative treatment which would not damage the

health of society. It was therefore a protection against pollution. This is Rāmānuja's conception of society and of its welfare. It is for posterity to assess his contribution. Rāmānuja therefore may be regarded as the upholder of "Socio-theistic-Absolutism", a term, new as it is, which includes the Supreme Reality, the blessing on the individual and the benefit to the masses. We have confined our attention to the aspect of benefit to the masses. The work is to elucidate the nature of equipment and contribution of Rāmānuja.

Chapter Divisions

The work is spread over eleven chapters. Chapter one deals with the Nature and Scope, Chapter divisions followed by the Survey of Sources. The second chapter is devoted to the sketch of Rāmānuja's life in its progress from academic awareness to reach the climax of conviction meeting the challenges to life with grim determination. The third chapter deals with Rāmānuja's conception of society as the abode of persons with varied ambitions and interests; the need for the existence of such a variety of interests and the importance of all the individuals constituting society to function as responsible members regardless of pride and prejudice, to maintain the harmonious nature of the unit. The chapter four deals with the method applied by Rāmānuja at the different levels of social life and discusses the main role of an individual in society, his rights and privileges. Rāmānuja conceives of society as a unit of inseparable parts, an organism which controls and guides each and every part directly. According to him, the organism is not a creation of the constituent parts, as it is a self-existing entity by its own right evolving along the tide of time, assuming different forms as a result of the interaction of the participants. The ideal form of society is the one in which all the participants behave and engage themselves in performance, being aware of their direct dependence on the unit from which they desire their energy. This is the doctrine of *Samanvaya* discussed in the *Samanvaya* section of the 'Śrī Bhāṣya'. *Samanvaya* is unity of purpose, conflict in life emerges in the absence of a single aim. This awareness makes healthy co-operation possible and society is continued to move along the normal pattern of affection and co-operation among the participants dedicated to serve the source from which the participants draw their spirit and energy. This conception enabled Rāmānuja to maintain the doctrine of "temperamental inheritance" as well as the spirit of equality

among all the participants. Anything that would alter this would upset the social equilibrium and pave the way for strife and struggle, the inescapable social evil. The social outlook which Rāmānuja developed was a result of his study of religion and philosophy which served as the fountain of life in its fullness.

Rāmānuja put this theory into practice in all fields of life. The most basic and universal being the 'economic aspect', he endorsed a scheme of agricultural operation relating to production and distribution said to have been practised during the time of the Pāṇḍyan king. At the industrial level the scheme kept every member of unit engaged in providing shelter, water, clothing and the like. Side by side with this, special interest was shown in the field of medicine, drawn largely from the botanical section of life. These aspects are discussed in Chapter five.

Rāmānuja formulated a two-fold theory self-restraint and enforcement of law. The two aspects together maintain social order. Self-restraint was maintained under the concept of 'non-adjustment', not to swerve from the stand that the individual is a direct dependent on the source and that his role in life would conform to that dependence primarily. The second one is the theory of "accommodation" which permits any one free access to every walk of life within the limit so that this access does not efface the awareness of the relation between the source and the dependent. This forms the theme of the sixth chapter.

At the highest level which is commonly described as the religious level, Rāmānuja has the following conviction. Religion and philosophy are not something alien to men, nor are they dealing with problems beyond life. Religion viewed in this light and introduced in actual life is distorted religion, because it splits itself into classes and creeds. Rāmānuja uses the word 'Religion' in the broadest sense of the term affecting the whole of society in this life. Religion, according to him, is an awareness and an attitude. A principle is there perfect in itself to hold society. It is the awareness of the life-spring that would keep the members of society alert, active, helpful and happy, whatever be the form that society may take along with its evolution. This sense of unity does not deny variety. It is a refining principle which prevents the emergence of licence and an element of disorder introduced by narrow outlook and interest. It is here that Rāmānuja has recognised in his fold of society the *Sattadārs* and the *Tiru-k-Kuluttārsa*—in particular, women not excluded. This principle covers the field of intellectual

investigation as well as the practice of ritual. It is socialism based on culture. This forms the seventh chapter.

Chapter eighth deals with the scheme of administration, the machinery which holds society together. It was introduced in the region at Mēlukōṭe in Karnāṭaka with the temple as centre of society. The monarch Viṣṇuvardhana who became the disciple of Rāmānuja was in charge of administration. Selection of groups are persons to serve in the different branches of administration was mainly on the basis of dedication. The basic education which was mandatory to one and all, was that service was power and the elixir of life. Secondly, no member could be denied the right to be and to continue as a member of society. The units drawn for service were required to stick to their portion of work as long as they continued as members of the team and thus provide for the preparation of the different types of work under the control of the central spirit. It is here that we find development in advanced study. Spread of education, social spirit and co-operation—all with the one aim of putting down narrow indiscrimination.

On the cultural side Rāmānuja was keen that, as far as possible, the masses must be kept informed of the vital element of wisdom to enable them not to be misled. With this idea he instituted a band of scholars with a special function of keeping the masses aware of their light in life. Great works were produced in this field and temples were instituted, particularly in the Karnāṭaka region, to spread his culture, (*Śrīvaiṣṇava* Culture). It would not be improper to assume that the Karnāṭaka region surrounding the famous temple of Mēlukōṭe was the field of his activity crediting him as the builder of the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* Society. It is noteworthy that in Mēlukōṭe the figure of Rāmānuja, a metallic production, was installed by himself. The figure is worshipped even to-day with utmost zeal and reverence and scheme of administration in particular, is recognised as the scheme formulated by the Master.

The ninth chapter discusses Rāmānuja's "Doctrine of Service". Regarding the aspect of service in life, Rāmānuja developed the concept of service from the lowest level of social contact to the highest level. Service, starting as a means to living, was looked upon by him as crude, though necessary. The highest form of service was identified with the habit and behaviour of the member of society in his full wisdom, rid of the element of self-interest on the reception side. This is the greatest contribution of Rāmānuja to society. Though it was not within the easy reach of all to rise

to this height of wisdom, he insisted that the aim should not be lost sight of. Amudanār who sketched the life of his Master specifically emphasises the unique features of Rāmānuja in the work 'Rāmānuja-Nuṣṣandādi' where he uses the following expression—

*"Irāmanuṣanai-p-Porunliname"*²

"We rallied around Rāmānuja"

*"Seṟu-kaliyāl varuṇḍiya Jñaratattai.....vandu eduttu aritavan"*³

"A sage of rare attainments appeared and liberated the world from the clutches of the tormenting Kali, the postulate of perversion."

*"Kasiniyār idarin-kan viṇḍidida-t-tānum avarpin padai kumai iramanuṣan tan padi iduve"*⁴

As the inhabitants of the world were plunged in grief, Rāmānuja, by virtue of his habit, would follow them to offer relief),

*"Padi konḍa kirti is irāmāyaṇam enrum pattiveḷ kudikonḍa koil irāmanuṣan"*⁵

Rāmānuja is the divine reservoir of the flood of Bhakti (devotion), the central teaching of the Rāmāyaṇa of world-wide fame.

The above description summarises the aim and outlook of Rāmānuja, his interest in society, the modal society he had in view and his attempt to introduce into social life the system which he recognised as model.

Chapter tenth is devoted to the study of Rāmānuja's legacy. His scheme did work for centuries effectively, but the tide of life has run such that the best in life is frequently missed and the bare form is retained. It is not peculiar to Rāmānuja only. It is a world-wide phenomenon. Leaders come, they establish a healthy order of things, volunteers gather around them in worshipful devotion and great determination to follow their lead in life and to pave the way for the future generation. Life being a complex of temperament and temptation, the majority being generally under the impulse of ignorance, the leaders do suffer martyrdom under their very following as time moves on. To remember a few world incidents in this connection: 'The League of Nations' came into existence only to be ignored later on. The 'United Nations Organisation', a living organisation

at present, has descended to the level of a body to express opinions. Within our own country Mahatma Gandhi is reduced to an entity to be worshipped as a leader and to stop with that. We cry after the leaders in times of peril and when we are free from peril we forget our saviours. Leaders in society need not run the risk of serving society at personal risk and sacrifice. This is not to strik a note of pessimism in life. The scheme put to practice in earnestness has a healing effect. The social order of Rāmānuja, as the orders introduced by other leaders of society, suffers on account of abuse. The last and the concluding chapter is the assessment of the contribution of Rāmānuja to the study of life from the social point of view.

Survey of the Sources

The sources for the work are confined to Literary works and Epigraphs. The literary works are classified into Primary and Secondary. Modern works on Rāmānuja have also been consulted.

Primary Source : (a) *Literature*—Regarding the Pre-Rāmānuja literary works which have been consulted for the study, mention may be made of the *Vedas*, *Manusmṛti* (of Manu) the *Rāmāyaṇa* (of Valmiki), *Bhagwad-gīta*, the *Divya Prabhandam* (of Ālvārs), *Mukanda Māla* (of Kulaśekhara) and the *Stotra-Ratna* of Yāminacharya).

Rāmānuja's own works are in order—*Vedārtha-Saṅgraha*, *Vedānta-Sāra*, *Vedānta-Dīpa*, *Śrī Bhaṣya*, the *Gadyatrāya* and the *Gīta-Bhāṣya*.

The Vedas—The earliest is undeniably the literature called the *Vedas*. It reflects life as it ought to be. The meaning of the word *Veda* is to enlighten. It is the book of knowledge. The main teaching of the *Veda* is two-fold an awareness of the link that man has with the changing world, on the one hand and the protecting principle on the other. This relationship is 'Prithak'⁶ and 'Apṛthak'⁷ according to the nature of the relata.

The relationship between the source principle and the dependent world is likened to the *Śarīra-Ātma* link—the body—mind relationship. That is a development of *Apṛthak-Siddhi*. This aspect was specially noticed by Rāmānuja as the basic concept to explain the nature, function and value of life.

Manusmṛti—It is a sanskrit work. It is an elucidation of the style of life in society prior to the stage of dealing with the *Upaniṣada*. The book prescribes the way of life to keep adversity under cheek. Emphasis is laid on 'Division of Society into Caste'

sections and the functions assigned to each caste. It would be a provisional arrangement to preserve society on a co-operative basis. The aim is personal and individual and as we shall see Rāmānuja was inspired by this thought.

The Rāmāyaṇa—The Rāmāyaṇa describes society under different guiding principles. The model type of society is presented in the style of performance by Śrī Rāma—the epic hero. It is therefore taken to be a description of the behaviour of participants to preserve society in its ideal condition and the responsibility of the leader to maintain social harmony.

The Bhagavad-gīta—The Bhagavad-gīta is a book enjoining on man the performance of 'duty'. He is ever to be active. Idleness is an incurable malady. In this work, the work enjoined on man is subjected to a process of refinement and the purest form of act has been maintained as 'service'. The concept of service is developed from the crudest form to the perfect form.

The two works, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Bhagavad-gīta, therefore point to the type of society in which man expects to live and the work that man has to do to be worthy to belong to that society. The Rāmāyaṇa points the role of the leader. The Bhagavad-gīta outlines the role of the individual in society. Rāmānuja is indebted to these two works.

The Divya Prabhandam—Rāmānuja introduced to the world another type of literature known as the *Drāviḍa-Vedānta* or the *Divya Prabhandams*—a composition in Tamil language consisting of 4000 verses. This section of literature starts from the basis of the *Apṛthak-Siddhi*—relationship between the source-principle and the dependent individual who seeks to reach the peak of perfection in life. The emphasis here is on the protective power of the source principle and the various types of incarnation it assumes to render protection on the basis of the relationship of *Sarīra-Ātma*. The principle in this work reflects the personal attention of the guardian of society and the awareness of such attention on the part of the dependent subject. Emphasis is laid on the spontaneity of the protecting power relieving man of any activity on his part for protection. Therefore human activity gets a new direction. It is service, 'Kainkarya'. It is not directed towards the source power which is perfect. Therefore this activity is directed towards society in the name of service to the source. This is known as 'Niskamakarma'—an activity untarnished by narrow motives and attractions. It pertains to the individual and it is real service. It pertains to a

social entity. This aspect contained in the 'Khila' section of the *Veda* is developed to such an extent that its value was realised by Rāmānuja.

The next source is the *Stotra*. This records the application of the protective power as felt by the recipient of protection. To this class belong the *Mukundamāla* of Kulaśekhara, the *Stotra-Ratna* of Yāmunaācharya.

Rāmānuja's own works are the *Vedārtha-Saṅgraha*, the *Vedānta-Sāra*, the *Vedānta-Dīpa*, the *Śrī Bhāṣya* and the *Gīta-Bhāṣya*. They deal with the concept of Brahman, the ubiquitous and its sway over the world. *Śrī Bhāṣya* is a comprehensive critical exposition of the system of *Vedānta* as contained in the Brahmasūtra of Vyāsa which forms the basis of philosophic thought among all the *Vedāntins*. The basic principles which holds society together for ever as a harmonious unit are determined in this work. The *Gadyatraya* (Śrī Vaikunṭa-Gadya, Śrī Rangagadya and Śaraṇāgati-Gadya) refers to the content of the *Drāviḍa-Vedānta*. It is here that the importance of the *Bhāgavad-Gīta* is felt. According to Rāmānuja, it starts with *Karma* in its crude form and ends with *Karma* in its most refined form. It may therefore be held that the *Vedic* teaching in Sanskrit determines the power of the protective power and the same section in Tamil describes the impact of that power on society.

Secondary Works : This is classified into contemporary and the post Rāmānuja works.

(a) *Contemporary* : To the biographic group belong the *Divya-Sūricarita* of Garuḍavāhana Paṇḍita in Sanskrit, *Yatirāja-Vaiḥhava* of Āndhrapūrṇa in Tamil. There are other works like the *Pañcastava* of Kūrēśa and *Dhatipañchaka* of Dāśirathi which belongs to the *Stotra* section. These contemporary works were written by his disciples.

(b) *Post-Rāmānuja Works* : The *Guruparaṃparā-Prabhavam* of Perumāḷ Jiyar in the Maṇi-Pravāla language is a traditional work. The peculiarity of this biographic literature is that it deals with the life of Rāmānuja and his predecessors from the point of *Anṛthak-Siddhi*. The work can therefore be regarded as authoritative historical account from a larger historical perspective. The other works namely, '*Mumukṣu-Paddi*' and '*Śrīvācanabhuṣaṇa*' of Lokācārya are succinct account of life and its function on the basis of the *Drāviḍa-Vedānta*. The *Ācārya-Hṛdaya* of Māyanār is a refutation of the 'Doctrine of Individualism'

in the philosophy of Rāmānuja, written in *Maṇi-Pravaḷa* language. One more work in the *Maṇi-Pravaḷa* called *Varta-Mala* records the observations of the savants of the *Viśiṣṭha-dvaita* which may be regarded in a light vein as cultural gossip. To this group belongs another work *Yatindra-Pravaṇa-Prabhāva* of Piḷḷai-Lokam Jiyar which deals with the lives of post-Rāmānuja leaders of Viśiṣṭha-dvaita School.

The *Koviloḷugu* in Tamil prose is a record of gifts made, and repairs and additions effected to the temple of 'Śrī Ranganatha' at Śrīrangam and it records the tradition of the temple. '*The Temple Manual*' of *Mēlukōṭe* in Kannada also records the tradition of the temple at Mēlnkōṭe. Yet another work is '*Prapannamṛtam*' written by Anantārya. It deals with the lives of *Āḷvārs* (Saints) and *Ācāryas* (the leading agents in life).

(c) *Modern Works*: To this are added the following works in English for convenience of reference—Govindācārya Swami A—*The Life of Śrī Rāmānuja*, Srinivasa Aiyengar C.R., *The Life and Teachings of Śrī Rāmānuja*, Swami Ramakrishnananda, *Life of Śrī Rāmānuja* Yāmūnācārya M, *Rāmānuja's Teachings in his Own Words*, *Śrī Subrahmanya Ayyar lectures on the History of Śrīvaiṣṇavas* delivered by the Late Gopinatha Rao T.A. Shree P, *Śrī Rāmānuja*.

Epigraphy

Another important primary source for our study is epigraphy. Inscriptions, though scanty for our study, provide valuable material. They are found written on stone and copper plates. Many of them record the consecration of temples, the construction of canals and *agrahārās* (Brahmana Settlements) by monarchs, chieftains, the private individuals and the public. They also contain the gifts made and repairs and additions effected, to the temples. They also give valuable information about the land grants and gift of money made by them under cultural coverage, and as such direct references to Rāmānuja are scarce. The available contemporary and the later inscriptions serve only to indicate the vague and popularity of the socio-religious leader Rāmānuja and the impact of his teachings. For instance, Belūr 58^s of A.D. 1117 records the consecration of the great temple at Belūr by Viṣṇuvardhana, the Hoysaḷa monarch. He was devoted to the worship of Furushotama and was a devotee of Rāmānuja. He set up with faith the God Vijayanārāyaṇa and provided for the daily ceremonies, the decorations and the offerings for Lord

Vijayanarayana and Lakshminarayana and also for the livelihood of 'Śrīvaiṣṇava Brahmanas'. Another inscription in the temple at Tonnūr⁹ of the 14th Century records a gift of land to the Rāmānuja Maṭha by the Mahajanas (the local citizens). Another inscription of the 14th Century found at Garuḍa temple in the Nāmada Katte garden records that Immadi Ravuttaraya Madhappadannāyaka, son of Perumaḷudēva, Dannāyaka of Heḍatale, made over the title of land noticed by Emberumanar as Tirumaṇ (the holy clay paste), to God Tirumanna-Perumāl. It is dated the year Siddharthi Ashada Su. I Monday. The details may be equated with A.D. 1319 June 18th Monday¹⁰. A 13th Century inscription discovered on a stone paved into the floor of the Yatiraja Maṭha describes that Kotiyappa Setti described as Aḷagiya Malavala dāsar of Terakanāmbi made a grant of two villages and wet land to the Rāmānuja-kūta¹¹. Another epigraph found at the temple of Mēlukote and belonging to the reign of Krishnadēvarāya explains the sale deed granted to Rāmānuja Iyengar. The details are as follows :

"May it be suspicious, obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja, while the illustrious.....Krishnadēva Maharaya was ruling the kingdom.....worshippers of the divine lotus feet of God Sampath Kumāra Nārāyaṇadēva of Tirunārāyaṇapura, establisher of Vedic religion, Rāmānuja... the sale deed granted to Rāmānuja Iyengar is as follows— For feeding daily the Śrīvaiṣṇavas.....We have sold from the treasury.....to you. Hence these two plates offered food.....as we have received in full.....to this two Kulas suecession of the disciples for as long as moon and sun endure, the Rāmānuja Kūta, To this effect is the writing of Rāmānuja the Senabeva of the Treasury".

(The translations of the Inscription are given in the Appendix No. I)

REFERENCES

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2. Amudanār : *Rāmānuja Nuṛṇḍāḍi*, (c.d.), Annagracharya, Kāñchi, 1903, verse 31.

3. *Ibid*, verse 32.
4. *Ibid*, verse 36.
5. Amudanār, Op. Cit., verse 37.
6. Note : Pṛthak—Piece Meal.
7. Note : Aprthak—Integral.
8. *Epigraphia Carnatica* (ed.), Rice, 1902, Bangalore, Vol. V, Pt. I, Bl. 58.
9. *Ibid*, (Revised ed.,) B.R. Gopal, Institute of Kannada Studies, University of Mysore, 1977, Vol. VI, Tonnur 55.
10. *Ibid*, Vol. VI, Mēlukōṭe 185.
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CHAPTER II

Rāmānuja's Education and Academic Adventure

Preliminary Equipment—Eminence—The Span of Life—Rāmānujā; The Man—Birth and Parentage—Environment and Early Education—Marriage—The Venture—Approach to problems in Life—Search for a Guide—Rāmānuja Dissented with his Master Yādava Prakāśa Over the Interpretation of Vital Statements in the Vedānta—Frankness Fought with Danger—Rāmānuja in Wilderness—The Period of Transition—The Quality of Gratitude and its Effect—Rāmānuja and Kāñcīpūrṇa—The New Hope and the Venture—Rāmānuja Follows the Suggested Course—Guidance Obtained—The Divorce—The Contribution of the Five Ācāryas—Rāmānuja's Confrontation with one of the Ācāryas—The Influence of the Rāmāyaṇa on Rāmānuja's Social Outlook—Resistance to Aggression and Arrogance—Rāmānuja and Goṣṭhipūrṇa—Generous Attitude—Disclosing the Message to the Public—Discipline, Social and Personal—Rāmānuja's Sojourn to Kashmir—The Composition of the Śrī Bhāṣya—Rāmānuja as a Synthesiser—The Limitation of the Teacher.

Preliminary Equipment

In order to appreciate Ramanuja's contribution, it is necessary to study his struggle against adversity. Rāmānuja belongs to the line of great seers and ascetics who held aloft the torch of Indian culture as handed down from the *Vedic* times. The Vedic culture is recognised as the most ancient and comprehensive, covering human life from the greedy start to the goal of enduring happiness for beyond the reach of affliction. The *Iśavasya Upaniṣad* refers to the course of life in general in the opening verse and prescribes a regulated way of life in which personal preservation is emphasised, but greed is prohibited.

“Tena tyaktena bhūñjīrāḥ

Maṅḍhah kasyasvit dhanam”¹

Keep with that detachment, Do not cover any one else's wealth.

The verse requires every one to feed oneself on the world produce with contentment and not to cast greedy eyes on others possession. The verbs *bhūñjitaḥ* (utilise) and *Maḡradhan* (do not grab) in the above verse are injunctive and prohibitory. They refer to what is to be adopted and what is to be avoided. This is the basic principle to be kept in mind by one and all to maintain society as a healthy organism.

Eminence

Rāmānuja's style of living was of a high order compelling the attention of people around him who, in all sincerity and seriousness, wished to reap for themselves the best of life. In that way he was one of the great leaders who paved the way for a truly noble and happy life in this world. His influence on mankind is summed up in the following verse attributed to one of his staunch disciples Dāśrathi by name.

Puṇyāmbhoja-vikāśaya
Pāpa-dhivānta-kṣayaya ca
Śrīman āvirabhūt bhūmau
Rāmānuja divākaraḥ"²

The bright Sun, Rāmānuja the splendrous emerged in the world. The consequence being the disappearance of the darkness of evil and the blossoming of the lotus of merit.

The Span of Life

The life span of Rāmānuja extended to one hundred and twenty years. It was determined in a strange way. The year of his birth was denoted by the expression '*Dhih-lab-dha*'³ (knowledge is obtained). Likewise the year of his exit was marked by the expression '*Dharmo-ṇaṣṭaḥ*'⁴ (Righteousness slipped out of reach). The first expression suggests the dawn of knowledge, wisdom. The second signifies the disappearance of the enduring power. These words signify his hold on life in society. The initial consonant of a syllable represents a number. In the present instance, the conjunct consonant *dh* stands for nine the consonant *t* for three, the consonant *M* for five, *n* represents zero, *t* one. The counting is in the reverse order. Hence nine thirty-nine (939) would denote the year of his birth according to the *Śalyāhana Śaka* which with an addition of seventy eight represents the Christian era. Similar is the case in *Dharmona-ṣṭaḥ* reversing the order, the year of exit would be ten fifty-nine

(1059) *Śaltivāhana Saka*. It would appear that *Dhi* and *Dharma* were in full swing during the life-time of Rāmānuja. Such a description is unknown with regard to his predecessors.

It is natural therefore to consider the propriety of this epithet. It could be the presentation of Rāmānuja of society in glowing terms by a few of his fanatic admirers or it might mean that the tribute paid to him was in recognition of the greatness of the person who had risen to eminence denied to many stalwarts. In the latter alternative his life deserves to be studied in an objective manner on the basis of which his contribution to mankind has to be assessed.

Rāmānuja, The Man

The biographic buildup of Rāmānuja's personality is an essential preliminary to his contribution to society in the wake of refinement and reformation along the lines regarded as pure, profitable and enduring to mankind. In any walk of life this aspect forms a necessary part of historical estimate of a person's worth and his contribution. His contribution to society is revealed in his undying zeal for social reform as gathered from his biography by Amudanār⁵ which contains 108 verses. He has explained the great influence of Rāmānuja on his own personality as follows.

*"Aḍi-k-kiḷ ennai sertta-darke"*⁶
Glued me to the feet of the Lord.

*"Ennai puviiḷ oru poruḷ ākki"*⁷
Made me a full fledged person.

Rāmānuja's sole aim was to revive the abiding awareness of love and equality among men as participants in the social setup, but not to disrupt the social structure which is a phenomenon beyond the powers of any one or all of the participants in society. A person of that gift and stature is rare to be found frequently in society. Centuries after, in modern times, society was blessed with a person of the type of Mahatma Gandhi whose attempt to reintroduce peace and prosperity among men reminds of the performance of Rāmānuja some nine hundred years before.

Birth and Parentage

Rāmānuja was born in Śaka 939 corresponding to 1017 A.D. in a small village called Śrī Mahābhūtapurī⁸ in South India, now designated as Tamil Nadu. He belonged to an orthodox brahmin family of the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* order. His maternal grandfather was Śrī Śailapūrṇa

of Tirupati, a disciple of the great Vaiṣṇava teacher Yāmunācārya Śrī Śailapūrṇa had two sisters by name Kantimati and Dyutimati¹⁰ who were known also as Bhūdēvi and Śrīdēvi. He selected two *Vaidika Brahmanas* whom he put into the Śrivaishnava order by administering to them what is technically known as *Pañcasamskāra* (five-fold efficacy). The husband of Kāntimati, Kēśvasomayajin by name, had reputation of belonging to a family which performed *Somayāga*. Rāmānuja was the son of Kēśvasomayajin and Kantimati. The other sister of Śrī Śailapūrṇa was married to Kamalanayana Bhaṭṭa and a son by name Govinda Bhaṭṭa was born to them. Govinda Bhaṭṭa, the cousin of Rāmānuja on the maternal side became a staunch disciple of Rāmānuja and came to be known as the shadow of Rāmānuja (Rāmānuja-pada-cohaya)¹¹. The expression suggests that Govinda Bhaṭṭa was the closest follower of Rāmānuja in all respects, just as Rāmānuja was the follower of Śaṭhakōpa—

*"Māraṇ aḍi paṇḍu uyndvan"*¹²

Won emacipation by the lead given by Māraṇ Śaṭhakōpa.

*"Yāṇṇ ni enudamaiyum niyē"*¹³

I am you and my belonging also is yourself.

Environment and early Education

Following the traditional practice, the *Vedic* way of life was closely followed by the orthodoxy in Śrī perumbūdūr¹⁴. The presiding deity of the village known as Ādi Kēśavaperumāḷ was the only object of worship. The worship was, it is to be assumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary, in the form of rituals and sacrifices enjoined in the *Vedas*. That was the profession of one and all throughout life. In the process, education was confined to serve the purpose of ritual. Accordingly Ramanuja received along with his cousin brother, the *Vedic* education at home.

Marriage

Rāmānuja got married soon after his education at home was completed¹⁵. As a member belonging to the class of house-holders, he was called upon to discharge his duties, with the assistance of his wife, to serve society in the conventional way.

According to Manu, the stage of the *Grhastha* (house-holder) is held to be the best of the four *asramas* or (stages of life)¹⁶.

*"Gṛhasthaḥ ucyate śreṣṭhaḥ
 Sa trīṇ etān bibharti hi
 Yathā nadi-nadāḥ sarve
 Sāgare yanti samsthitim
 Tathaiva āśramaṇaḥ sarve
 Gṛhasthe yānti samsthitim"*.

The house-holder is said to be the best, for he serves the three other *āśramins*, *Brahmacārīn* (bachelor), *Vānaprastha* (the seeker after secluded resort) and *Sānyāsin* (ascetic). Even as all the rivers flowing eastward and westward find their steady shelter in the ocean, so also members of all the *āśramas* (stages), without exception, find their shelter in the *āśrama* of the house-holder.

*"Teṣāṃ trāyaṇaṃ śuśrūṣaṃ
 Paramam tapaḥ ucyate
 nataiḥ abhyānanuḥjyataḥ
 dharmam anyam samācaret"*¹⁷.

The best form of the dedicated life, *Tapas* (penance), said is to be service to the three groups.

Purport : These lines suggest the superiority of the householder to others.

*"Yathā vāyum samaśritya
 Vartante sarvajantavaḥ
 tathā gṛhastham āśritya
 Vartante sarva āśramaḥ
 Yasmāt tryaopt āśramaḥ
 Jñānena, amena ca, anvaham
 Gṛhastenaiva dharyante
 Tasmāt jyeṣṭhāśramgṛhi"*¹⁸.

Even as all living being depend upon breath, so also persons belonging to different *āśramas* depend upon the house-holder. Because all the three *āśramins* are maintained by only the *gṛhastha* (house-holder) daily for food and knowledge. Therefore the house-holder's walk of life is recognised as the most superior.

In this life there is scope for active participation in serving society. The service aspect involves the public. It is evident that the house-holder has the responsibility of ministering to the needs of other classes of society who come under the categories of the *brāhmacārīn*, the *vānaprastha* and the *sānyāsin* (ascetic).

In accordance with the Hindu tradition as explained by Manu, Rāmānuja entered the life of a house-holder which was considered to be the most useful among the four *āśramas*, because it was in this *āśrama* that an individual engages himself in discharging multifarious duties. The spirit of sacrifice and obligation dawns and develops a sense of social awareness and responsibility.

The Venture

Rāmānuja was restless. He was eager to know the truth about life and its significance. He felt that in the absence of such knowledge his life would be imperfect. Real happiness would not be felt till after acquiring that knowledge. He seemed to have set for himself the course of true life.

Rāmānuja tried to pursue that knowledge which would emancipate him from ignorance and fill his life with perfect and enduring joy. But in the process of this pursuit he was determined not merely to acquire that knowledge, but also to assess and appreciate it in all its dimensions. This knowledge went far beyond the mere pursuit after transitory comfort and luxury, which were the reward for dedication only to the ritual.

It is interesting to note that Rāmānuja desired to achieve that precious and perfect knowledge remaining in the service of society as a house-holder.

Approach to problems in Life

Rāmānuja never tried to run away from society in order to work out his own personal salvation. On the other hand, from the beginning he had an instinct, an inward self-direction which he nourished and cultivated in the course of his life to solve the problems of life. It was his belief that true knowledge was the fountainhead of joy. His approach to it was objective and realistic. He also believed that confusion and contradiction were associates of knowledge. But these defects would disappear once the pursuer of knowledge develops an objective, synthetic and critical attitude. For this he needed a *guru* (teacher).

Search for a Guide

Belonging to the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* fold of brahmins, Rāmānuja was expected to seek guidance from leaders of the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* School. But he felt that formal convention ought not to stand in the way of seeking the help of a guide who could expound the truth and value

of life as recorded in the *Vedānta* in an objective way. Convention based on faith only does not lead to mental satisfaction. Knowledge alone has the power to govern faith. Hence to go beyond convention is not a sign of guilt in the field of enquiry. Rāmānuja urged by his inner instinct, disregarded the convention of confining only to the *Srīvaiṣṇava* group. For any type of progress he had to go outside that group as he did not find a person belonging to that group who was competent to guide him. However, he did not ignore the convention set up by Vedic tradition, that a *tri-varṇika* (pertaining to three castes) competent and authorised to teach the *Vedānta* should be approached. So he went along with his cousin Govinda to the then famous *Vedāntin* (philosopher) by name Yādava-prakāśa¹⁹ Who expounded the philosophy of the *Vedānta* as handed down by tradition through the frame of critical appreciation, even though the said master did not belong to the category of *Vedāntins* treading the *Srīvaiṣṇava* path. Rāmānuja rejected the latter convention which he felt did not help him towards true enlightenment. He broke the narrow convention to establish the broad convention. The dogmatic was dropped to entertain the rational. This marks the first event in his outlook about the power of custom. It is an aspect of the doctrine of social service according to the School of Rāmānuja.

As it would become clear later, a custom which would hinder the development of personality deserves to be rejected in preference to another custom which helps the development of the personality which is at once an aid to self-preservation and the fountain of utility to society²⁰.

During this period the name of Yādavaprakāśa was familiar to scholars. He was looked upon as the foremost exponent of the thought contained in the *Vedas*. His name was as significant as that of his predecessors in the field, namely, Bhāṣakara and Śaṅkara.

Rāmānuja was not content with observing rituals prescribed in the *Vedas* with the sole purpose of attaining personal prosperity during life here and hereafter. In other words, he would not stop with blindly following the routine rituals and offerings prescribed in the scriptures. The *Vedas* themselves had recognised the shortcomings of such a course. As pointed out by Rāmānuja, they were intended to be only steps for gaining knowledge of the nature and value of life in its essence and realising it. The super-ritualistic speculation constituted the sum and substance of the teaching of the *Vedānta*—the final part of *Vedic* culture. Under these circumstances

Rāmānuja felt an urge in him to study the *Vedānta* which would regulate his life in such a way that he would no longer be a helpless victim of dogma which would generate passion and prejudice. As Yādavaprakāśa was the most outstanding exponent of *Vedānta* as contained in the *Upaniṣadic* literature in the contemporary period. Rāmānuja thought that his thirst for true knowledge could be quenched at the feet of this great *ācārya* (leading agent in life). At that time he developed the desire to know the basic structure of life, its function and value.

Rāmānuja dissented with his Master Yādavaprakāśa over the Interpretation of vital statements in the Vedānta

The three statements viz., '*Sarvam khalu*'²¹ '*Satyam Jñānam Anantham*'²² and '*Kapyāsam-Puṇḍarikam*'²³ are helpful in determining the nature of Brahman. Its relation to cosmos and its function towards the cosmos. Special mention has been made regarding these three topics, where Rāmānuja would not agree with his master. If the master's view is accepted, the human being would have no option but to cut himself away from the world which is an atmosphere of despair and disappointment. If, on the other hand, as Rāmānuja maintained, the escapist attitude is overcome, the world would provide an opportunity for the development of human personality to its climax. If only the wrong notion which haunts the mind is removed, the cosmos would be an extension of the atmosphere of joy and venture. The world therefore affords an opportunity for self-fulfilment. Detachment is not detachment from the world. True detachment is detachment from the erroneous view of the world lurking in the human mind. Error replaced by truth, presents the world as an oasis which, otherwise, remains a desert.

The importance of this aspect cannot be belittled. For Rāmānuja's socialistic impulse and indulgence was to correct himself and to help society to correct itself if possible. That marks him out and out an unparalleled personality.

The dispute with the master on these points which brought him victory is recorded in the biographic references, by his contemporaries. It would therefore be not irrelevant to quote the remarks of his contemporaries.

*"Sarvam khalu idam Brahma"*²⁴

All this indeed is the Supreme.

“*Tataḥ Kadācit dhuri yādavena
Saryam-khalu-sruti-avisaradena
Apārtha ukte sa yathārtham uktvā
Rāmānuja adarśayat arthasām*”.²⁵

Then on an occasion at the beginning when Yādava, who did not know the full implication of the proposition ‘*saryam khalu*’ projected a wrong interpretation and gave the meaning which appeared to be cogent Rāmānuja revealed the inter import.

“*Satyam Jñanam Anantam*”²⁶

Brahman is existent, knowledge and infinite.

The import of the above expression, according to Rāmānuja, would be that ‘Brahman is ever the same, non-material and unlimited and therefore Brahman is distinct from mind and matter.

“*Kapyāsam Puṇḍarikam
Kapyasa sabdasya vadati apārtham
Tasmīn tada abhyanga-kṛitāḥ kadacit
Rāmānujasya āsu tadūru-dāhi
dr̥ṣṭva āśṛt sopi unmukta sambharamo bhūt Kapyāsam*”.²⁷

A passage in the *Upaniṣad* describing the eyes of the Supreme Person is briefly remembered as the *Kapyāsa Śruti*.

When an irrelevant explanation was made by Yādava on the expression *Kapyāsa*, on an occasion of taking an oil bath, the hot tears from the eyes of Rāmānuja were observed falling on *guru's* thighs; the *guru* became agitated and looked up.

“*Tasya yatha Kapyasam Puṇḍarikam evam akṣiṇi*”.

His eyes are, thus as *Kapyāsam*—that is, the monkey's buttock, *Puṇḍarika*—the white lotus.

This was the sense conveyed by the master to Rāmānuja. But the inner instinct of Rāmānuja would not tolerate the narrow, artificial and distorted presentation of the truth. He would not accept the teacher's explanation. He demanded a synthetic and comprehensive treatment of the subject. The aesthetic aspect of experience and its significance could not be neglected or explained away even if one were to be a recluse. The objective frame of mind was for him the source of any successful venture. In his

opinion, the explanation was vulgar and without any value. The addition of a second example did not make any extra contribution to the concept. It was therefore a case of tautology and a load on the concept to no purpose. Precious words and expressions do not deserve to be treated in a light, loose and partial way. The description of the eye as suggested by the master does not impress the mind aesthetically, or intellectually or even pragmatically. When a better way can be found, the juvenile style has to be given up. The explanation that Rāmānuja gave was as follows—*Vedic* expressions are etymological in form as maintained by the great sage Yāska in his work called *Nirukta*.²⁸

“*Nāma, ākhyāta, upasarga, nipātāh*”

A word may refer to a name, act, prefix or affix.

Accordingly, a possible interpretation would be thus—‘*Kapi*’ is derived from two words—*Ka* and *Pa*. The first word denotes the water. The second refers to an agent who drinks water. *Kapi* therefore means the planet sun who draws the water from the ocean through his rays. *Āsam* is an object which is made to blossom by *Kapi*. The compound word *Kapyāsam* refers to the flower which blossoms under the influence of the sun. Among the flowers that blossom, lotus in particular has been recognised as blossoming under sunshine. Accordingly, *Kapyāsam Puṇḍarikam* is a phrase denoting the bright lotus which blossoms under the influence of the sun who draws the water from the ocean. There is a reference to the origin, the growth and the charm of this flower and the means by which it has developed itself to perfection. This can have a reference to the growth of life under the care and influence of the Source of life—spirit, which feeds the entire world and raises it to charming perfection. This interpretation perhaps was the result of his attitude to problems that demand a solution. The attitude should be realistic and objective and the view must be synthetic and comprehensive. The master regarded the behaviour of the pupil as look of discipline. The pupil, on the other hand, felt that in the field of thought and discourse, status and sentiment could not count though the relationship between the pupil and the master was not to be weakened. Rāmānuja felt that the student-teacher relationship in its true form was an effort of co-operation to unravel the mystery about the significance of life, conflict is confined to thought only. The thinker is excluded.

Frankness fraught with Danger

Rāmānuja had to part company because he did not accept the master's approach to the problems of study. Yādavaprakāśa lost control over himself and ordered his student to quit his fold. This he did when he felt that Rāmānuja's explanation was superior to his own, as it was realistic, comprehensive and elevating in outlook—a very strange incident in the life of Rāmānuja as a student.

Rāmānuja in Wilderness

Yādavaprakāśa's intolerance of the behaviour of his pupil went far beyond the expulsion from the fold of his pupils. A fiendish thought possessed the master. Persons clinging to power and prestige are generally haunted by evil thoughts under the spell of passion. He wanted to do away with his pupil once for all. At the same time he did not want to be detected and condemned for the crime. He therefore planned a trip to the holy Vārāṇasī, where Rāmānuja could be forced to be washed away the flood waters of the Ganges.²⁹ With this intention Rāmānuja was sent for again and the entire party led by the master moved towards the holy city of Vārāṇasī. As the party entered the dense Vindhya forest, on the way it became hard for the members to keep together. Rāmānuja was unable to keep with the party and he felt was isolated in a place where he could not expect any shelter or guide. He found himself in wilderness. He was desperate.

The period of Transition

Rāmānuja's Return to Kāñci—As it generally happens in life on such occasions, chance brought to his presence a hunter and his wife. Their personality was pleasant and imposing. They announced themselves as southward bound and offered to escort Rāmānuja thither if he wanted their help and if he would follow them³⁰. The offer was readily accepted with all joy and soon during the dawn sometime later the three were within the reach of Kāñci.

The quality of gratitude and its Effect

The lady exclaimed that she felt thirsty and she would like water to be brought to drink. The sense of gratitude was powerful in Rāmānuja who saw the existence of a well nearby and offered to fetch the water. As he came out to meet the companions he was surprised that the benefactors were out of sight. The early sunrise made him familiar with the region and he saw the temple at Kāñci

which he quickly entered with the vessel containing the water. The personality of the escorting couple seemed strikingly similar to that of the Presiding deity of Kāñcī and His divine spirit in the temple appeared to him in the forest as a hunter and that was an act of divine favour showered upon him during distress out of grace and pity. He also felt within himself that his thirst for knowledge was reflected in the lady's demand for water to slake her thirst. He therefore undertook the service of fetching the holy water from the well every day for worship. The well even to-day is regarded as a sacred spot under the name of Śalai-k-Kinar³¹. The episode may appear mythical, but it has a vital bearing on Rāmānuja's life and quest after knowledge.

Rāmānuja and Kāñcīpūrṇa

Traditional Convention Disregarded—Just in the way Rāmānuja dedicated himself to fetch the water from the well to the temple for worship everyday, there was another person engaged in the service of the Lord, fan in hand. He was known as Kāñcīpūrṇa. Not privileged to belong to the privileged caste as determined in the *Vedas*, he could not wear the sacred thread on his person, a precondition to take up *Vedic* studies. All the same he appeared to be peerless in point of piety, devotion and outlook. He was accordingly described as a *Śattada Śrivaishṇava*³² a devotee without the mantle of the twice-born. Kāñcīpūrṇa was reputed to have possessed a peculiar faculty permitting his direct communion with the Lord on certain chosen occasions. Rāmānuja learnt of this privilege. His personal desire to know the truth about the basic structure of life continued unabated. He could no longer go to Yādavaprakāśa. He was convinced that Yādavaprakāśa was incompetent for the task. No other name was heard of. Rāmānuja thought of approaching Kāñcīpūrṇa to furnish the answer to his doubts by pressing into service his super intellectual gift. The superiority of Kāñcīpūrṇa as the home of great wisdom made such an impression on Rāmānuja that he prevailed on Kāñcīpūrṇa to accept a dinner as a 'guest in veneration' *Atithidāya*³³. This he thought was also a part of service as it referred to a person steeped in devotion to the Supreme *Bhāgavata*. Kāñcīpūrṇa had the gift of intuition. He, however, belonged to a community not qualified to study the brahminical lore and employ the brahminical apparatus and technology to present the truth. Rāmānuja did not mind that the master was not a brahmin in the accepted sense of the term. He did not

hesitate to receive him as 'guest of honour'—*Atithi* and accord to him at dinner the status which an *Atithi* (guest) is entitled to as enjoined in the *Upaṇiṣad*³⁴. The invitation was accepted but not as Rāmānuja desired. It is again an accident that when the guest came the host was absent and the hostess served the food. Rāmānuja discovered that the behaviour of his wife wounded his sense of service and attitude to the guest. The mandate is *Atithidāyobhava*. Guest is to be regarded as divine. The four dignitaries to be treated on a divine level are—the mother, the father, the *ācārya* and the guest.

This event is a clear record in the life of Rāmānuja. Mere convention cannot control the higher reaches of life. But the refusal of Kāñcīpūrṇa to oblige Rāmānuja suggests that convention can be overlooked only when it is a hurdle. As an instrument, however, of preserving the higher truths it shall not be violated. On this assumption Kāñcīpūrṇa excused himself³⁵.

*"Kāñcīṣārcana nirataḥ pūrva
Kāñcīpūrṇārya Sa varda sūnṛt-oktipātram ācāryam
niḥam acikīrṣad apyavamsyam, nogaṇyo bhavati
Mahātmanām kulādih"*.

As before devoted to the worship of the Lord at Kāñcī. He (Rāmānuja) desired to trest as his *ācārya* Kāñcīpūrṇārya who was the receiver of the utterances of the Lord directly. Though he belonged to a different caste, the worldly pedigree of the great does not come in for consideration.

*Purṇo yadapi varadanu-kampayā aham
nōyuktam dvijavara
laukika kramasya ityuktivā pranati-param sa
tam nyarautsīt
nocchrāyan prahayati sajjanaḥ svakiyam"*³⁶

No doubt I am and I am under the mercy of Lord Varadha. O ! noble brahmin it is improper that I should employ the technical formality. Having said so Kāñcīpūrṇa halted Rāmānuja who knelt before him. Men of wisdom do not project their eminence.

Garuḍavananapaṇḍita, the contemporary of Rāmānuja, observes this event as the mark of humility. Kāñcīpūrṇa was completely free from which means *Vidyamada* the feeling of competence to

explain any and every aspect of experience and also intellectual conceit and arrogance. He was not familiar with the *Vedāntic* procedure though he had clear knowledge of the conclusion based on it. In other words, he was not familiar with the technological aspect proscribed in the Vedas. Rāmānuja felt that because Kāñcī-pūrṇa possessed the wisdom, he must also have been familiar with the methodology leading to wisdom.

The new hope and Venture

Trip to Śrīrangam to meet Yāmunācārya—The hurdle in the way of Rāmānuja's quest for truth kept him ever agitated in mind. He was taken to another great scholar at Śrīrangam by name Yāmunācārya of whom he had heard. But the moment he reached Śrīrangam he learnt that the great master had a deep desire to consult an important source of information without which he would not pronounce a final opinion on truth. This report enhanced the respect of Rāmānuja for that scholar. He appreciated the attitude that any conclusion based on insufficient material would continue to be a dogma. He readily resolved to trace the unexplored source and build his thought.

By the time Rāmānuja and the pupil went to Śrīrangam to meet the great scholar-saint Yāmuna, they were able to see him as a pious soul just departed with three fingers folded, which were suggestive of want of opportunity for the *acarya* to realise his three wishes during his life time. He returned again to Kāñcī with a heavy heart, that he had no teacher to guide³⁷.

Rāmānuja follows the suggested Course

Rāmānuja communicated his desire to have his surging doubts cleared and that he would be grateful if Śrīkāñcīpūrṇa would be pleased to provide the answer at least. Some time later the answer was communicated. It pertained to factual knowledge, the course to pursue the goal and the time of realisation and the guide to be approached³⁸.

*“Aham eva param tattayam
Darsanam bheda evaca
Upayastu prapattiḥ syāt
Antime-smṛti-varjanam
Dehavasane mokṣaḥ syāt
Purṇaryam tu samasrayet”.*

God, (I) alone is the Supreme Reality. The final truth is bheda—distinction between the Supreme (I) and the subordinate (I) *Upayastu Prapattiḥ*—The means to release is surrender or resignation. The functioning of memory at the time of death is avoidable and not obligatory. Release is to be realised at the end of this birth.

The doctrine of surrender takes away from human activity, the purposiveness towards emancipation and restricts it to the notion of service or *Kainkarya* as an inherent phase of life free from shackles and fetters of *Karma* (action). The factor that secures the release of the self from bondage is identified with the grace or disposition of the Supreme of which the finite self is the inseparable dependent.

The strangeness of the phenomenon was that Kāñcīpūrṇa furnished the answer without knowing himself the question. The answer therefore was taken as full and final by Rāmānuja. On the advice of Kāñcīpūrṇa Rāmānuja sought the help of Mahapūrṇa and his four other companions who were students of Yāmuna the great.

The contemporary society was generally inclined towards orthodoxy. But Rāmānuja tried to set aside such considerations. He was prepared to recognise higher merit in any human being outside of caste and status confines. He was humble enough to recognise Kāñcīpūrṇa as his *guru* (teacher). But what strikes one is the reaction of Kāñcīpūrṇa who was not ready to accept the offer of Rāmānuja, though he was spiritually in no way inferior to other great *ācāryas* of the period³⁹, because, the forces of distinctive disciplines connected with the study of life were such that Kāñcīpūrṇa politely declined to accept Rāmānuja as *Śiṣya* (disciple) in the accepted sense of the term.

Yet Rāmānuja's doubts concerning the basis and function of life were cleared by Kāñcīpūrṇa. Through him the Lord was supposed to have revealed the answer to his problems. What appears here is the concept presented by Kāñcīpūrṇa to Rāmānuja, namely, the fact of man's dependence on the 'Supreme Being' and without its grace and initiative, the impossibility to achieve anything in life. The organic view of life is projected in this context and its bearing on the social aspect cannot be ignored⁴⁰. The relation between members of society is through the source and not direct and independent. This is the doctrine of *ananyatva* and *samanvaya*, which Rāmānuja has discussed in detail in his *Śrī Bhāṣya*.

Guldance Obtained

Rāmānuja felt thrilled and encouraged. He went in search of his would-be master, Śrī Mahāpūrṇa, as he was known at that time who was returning from Śrirangam to Kāñcī. The pupil and the would-be master met mid-way at a place known as Madhurāntaka⁴¹, a little distant from Kāñcī. There Rāmānuja was initiated into the highest branch of study which was considered to be the *Rahasya* (inner-thought) of the *Upaṇiṣad* through the formal process conforming to the procedure of what was regarded as *Pañcasamskara*⁴² (five-fold efficacy).

Dedication to continue the spirit of Yāmuna, and never to conclude in the absence of Reliable Data

Progress with Mahāpūrṇa : Rāmānuja resolved to follow the tradition of Yāmuna with the help of his five students who come to be known as the life instructors—The *Pañcācāryas* (five masters) of Rāmānuja.

The Divorce

Rāmānuja continued the studies of the *Upaṇiṣads* and their commentaries including the epics, the *Purāṇas* and the section on rituals which are to be necessarily performed in life. This synthetic attitude is developed from the observation of Bodhayana on the *Brahmasūtras* that the entire Vedic teaching, both *Karmakāṇḍa* and *Brahmakāṇḍa*, constitute a single unit, *Śāstraikatva-siddhi* (unity of teaching to be maintained). It implies that nothing in the world should be rejected. On the other hand, the utilization must be controlled by proper evaluation. The study could not be continued for long. This time the hurdle came from Rāmānuja's wife. There was therefore a need for the pupil to keep himself free from indiscipline in the interest of his study⁴³.

The master Mahāpūrṇa and his team deserved respect and devotion at the hands of the pupil and his group. Rāmānuja's wife entertained an irrevocable feeling of her superiority traceable to her parentage over that of Mahāpūrṇa's wife. That itself was an offence at the mental level. To add to that, the behaviour of Rāmānuja's wife and the discourtesy she showed to the *guru's* wife was a social offence, to say the least, which would not come under the act of pardon, unless it was associated with true repentance. In this context the *ācārya* would not permit himself the degradation of describing the unbecoming attitude of Rāmānuja's wife, and he could not

continue the teaching in the disturbed atmosphere. He therefore decided to get back to Śrirangam with his family instead of directing Rāmānuja to discontinue the studies with him. The *ācārya* thought that withdrawal from the scene of conflict was the better course than letting a mood of aggression and aspersion against the offending party.

Rāmānuja was sad to find the master absent. He came to know that the disturbance was the result of his wife's behaviour. She was not a wicked lady, but being obstinate and unyielding she could not be persuaded to mend her ways and relish the thrill and joy of life above the level of vanity. He therefore decided to part from her and pursue his studies as before. He accepted the *āśrama* of *sanyāsa* at Kāñci and felt himself free to be in the company of his master and to follow the type of life free from pollution⁴⁴.

Mahāpūrṇa introduced Rāmānuja to the other four colleagues of his, all of them worthy disciples of Śrī Yāmūnācārya. The five disciples of Yāmuna were able to acquaint Rāmānuja with the views of their master on the vital problems of life.

The contribution of the Five Ācāryas

The *ācāryas* conveyed the significance of philosophic thought and its bearing on life in the course of studying the *Vedānta* and the great epics, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, not excluding *Smṛti* and the Purāṇas. One of the special contributions was the study of the *Drāviḍa Veda*, the store-house of knowledge recorded in the Tamil language recognised as '*Agastya*' discovered by the great sage Agastya. This section was regarded as the logical finale of the *Vedas* recorded in the Sanskrit language. The shift emphasised is from the view that the world is a separate block to the view that it is an inseparable part of the organic unit and, as such deserving of evaluation and appreciation in a synthetic and comprehensive attitude.

Rāmānuja's confrontation with one of the Ācāryas

Confrontation with Malādhāra : While discussing the import of Tiruvāimōḷi (the divine outburst in Tamil)⁴⁵, the *ācārya* interpreted a particular stanza⁴⁶ to suit the frame of mind to despise and discord the world which exposed it to grief and gloom.

“*Āriya-k-kalattulḷe*
Aḍimai-k-kaṇ anbu sevvittu

*Aṛiya mā māyattu
Aḍiyānai vuttitāḷ*"

During the pre-discrimination state desire for service was produced in me, but you pushed me your dependent into the abyssal world which extinguishes discrimination.

The usual thought is that God has imbued the finite self with the spirit of service and then put him down into the world which has powerfully affected and interfered with the spirit of life in service compelling the mind towards struggle for existence and self-preservation.

This thought suggests that the Absolute could be indifferent and life in the world is a bitter struggle against extinction. The note of pessimism is inescapable. According to Rāmānuja, this view does not conform to the true nature of the Absolute and is based on a narrow understanding of truth. He therefore interpreted the verse in a way in which he interpreted on a former occasion, the *Upaniṣadic* expression—*Kapyāsa* in the presence of *Yadavaprakaśa*. According to him, the stanza conveys note of optimism and whole-hearted loyalty towards the guiding master for be-friending the self incognito from the beginning and intensifying the desire to be engaged in service even in a world which is quite uncongenial to such a course of life.

*"Evam vidho arthopi ucito bhavediti
Uktam kvacit tatra yatiśvarena
Śrutvā guruḥ pūrṇa—yugāya cāha
Tābhyām ca tenāpi abhīmānitaḥ saḥ"*⁴⁷.

The interpretation furnished by me also looks to be relevant, so said Rāmānuja in a particular context.

Even as a student Rāmānuja faced the master with a counter exposition in which the frame of mind was filled with joy, fervour and gratitude, even under circumstances which would normally turn man to a mood of gloom and grief. The master frankly admitted that the interpretation of Rāmānuja had also been entertained by the great *guru* Yāmuna. The two masters *Kaṇḍīpūrṇa* and *Goṣṭhipūrṇa* heard this. They along with the other masters congratulated the pupil a mark of admiration and appreciation for presenting the truth.

The influence of the Rāmāyana on Rāmānuja's Social Outlook

Rāmānuja on the Concepts of Personality and Society : The

tradition among the orthodox is that the two epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, are an elucidation of the types of thought and behaviour contained in the *Vedas* in actual life. Rāmānuja particularly stresses the role of compassion towards the helpless. Responsibility rests with persons in power who uphold the power of *Dharma* (Righteousness) or righteous living and prevent and discourage any attempt towards defiling *Dharma* and ultimately destroying it. Mythical as it may seem, the concept of the solar dynasty suggests that the source of life of a person or society is the spring of light and energy which neither fades nor vanishes⁴⁸.

Like many other great *ācāryas* before, Rāmānuja also derived much inspiration from the great epics of the Hindus. His social philosophy to a great extent was moulded as a result of his deep study, particularly of the Rāmāyaṇa. As every Hindu was in some way or the other influenced by the characters and the episodes of this epic, it was natural that Rāmānuja turned his attention to the study of this epic. He was particularly alive to the attitude of Daśaratha and Rāma—father and son respectively. As a result of the study of this epic eighteen times, Rāmānuja discerned two contrasting principles of life as depicted in the lives of Daśaratha and Rama. According to Rāmānuja, Daśaratha was concerned with the short-term policies and problems of life in society. Rāma on the other hand, emphasised the importance of value in dealing with social problems. The failure of Daśaratha's administration was a product of his emphasis on the policy of expediency. Rāmānuja tried to synthesise the two concepts, namely, the useful and the enduring. But, in the ultimate analysis, Rāmānuja learnt, as a result of his study of Rāmāyaṇa, that the true goal of evolution should not be missed. It was this unique way of analysing and interpreting the great epic that helped him to put forward his own social philosophy. In this respect he was pragmatic and tried to conserve and reform society from within rather than from without.

Resistance to aggression and Arrogance

The life of Sita, the consort of Śrī Rāmā, helped Rāmānuja to realise the power and value of resistance to evil forces. The career of Sita which was full of unforeseen difficulties and degradations, isolation and misery, impressed Rāmānuja. In spite of all the troubles and tribulations, Sita remained firm in her conviction and had immense faith in herself. These aspects of Sita's character also moulded the ideology of Rāmānuja.

Thus the two impressions that Rāmānuja got from the study of the Rāmāyaṇa gave him the strength to contribute his best to society and to resist any form of attraction which might impair his personality. It would not be unrealistic to regard Rāmānuja as an ascetic (*sanyāsin*) in the fullest sense of the term. Personality he adopted the behaviour of Sīta and in the field of service he went to the full extent as Visualised by Śrī Rāma. The personality of Rāmānuja is a happy blend of the characteristics of Rāma and Sīta. In the Rāmāyaṇa Sīta did not yield to the seducing power of Rāvāna. Rama put an end to that power in his attempt to rescue Sīta and wiped out Ravaṇa and his army. The ladies who surrounded Sīta and ill-treated her under the compulsion of Ravaṇa were brought under protection by Sīta after the death of Ravaṇa though as belonging to Rāvāna they merited ill-treatment for their crime. Rāmānuja's role as *Sanyāsin* indicated that he would not be a victim to the social system as it then obtained. For it prevented the growth of a free society in a harmonious way: that is the role of Sīta that he permitted for himself in a strange situation. *Sanyāsa* (asceticism) was ordinarily understood as a way of personal protection and elevation without entering the province of polluting society. But, according to Ramanuja, *Sanyāsa* was a deliberate plunge into society without losing the personality.

The human organism is not a mere blend of the material and mental entities to pull on together harmoniously till the two separate. But if the mental entity could only know itself as distinct and unchanging unlike its material component, the opportunity should not be missed to realise the splendours nature of the spirit of the spiritual entity which combines with nature not merely for harmonious life-here, but also as an instrument for elevation. In consequence, life in the world of the enlightened spirit would be akin to the presence of the divine on the earth. Full personality could not be developed in the absence of attention to the spiritual side. That would naturally reduce man to a state of helplessness in the face of adverse forces of nature subjecting him to passion and prejudice the two basic defects to be guarded against. This attitude was proved in the life of king Dasaratha himself. According to Śrī Rāma, personal weakness instils the desire for outside conquest which may or may not be realised. But self-conquest makes one a part and parcel of the entire society and does not permit the individual to consider himself as different from society and superior to it. This view of refining man and pushing him up from vanity to humility

is the normal result that will accrue to a person who is keen on the development of personality in its true sense. This conviction stood as the basic support for Rāmānuja.

Rāmānuja and Goṣṭhipūrṇa

In his life of search for truth Rāmānuja came in contact with five *ācāryas*, who were experts in various fields of philosophical learning. Among them Goṣṭhipūrṇa, in particular, had a great reputation in the contemporary period for his scholarly exposition of the value of life and function of man in the world as revealed in the Bhagavad-gītā. Śrī Krishna draws a distinction between the apparent and the real regarding ambition and approach⁴⁹.

*“Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānam hṛddeśa Arjuna tiṣṭhati
Bhramayan sarva bhūtām Yatra ruddham māyaya”.*

Oh ! Arjuna, casting his veiling power, the Supreme Lord of unlimited controlling power stays in the heart of all these revolving as though they are on the rotating wheel.

The apparent aim of life is happiness in the world beyond. In both these worlds the material contact is unavoidable, its influence is irresistible and the resulting happiness is mixed and impermanent due to the fact the association is with that part of life which is ever changing. Existence of the self and its experience in contact with the material side completely cut off would be unreal and imperfect. Because the Cosmos composed of the mental and material parts are both controlled by a Super power which exists by its own right holding under control the entire Cosmos. Śrī Krishna discloses the sure way towards freedom and release. He says—

*“Māmeva ye prapadyante
Māyām etām tarantīte”⁵⁰.*

Those who resort only to me, they alone can move beyond the bewildering condition of life.

These passages reveal that human beings like the material objects are totally under the sway of the Supreme. In consequence human endeavour by itself deserves to be discounted as ineffective towards release and freedom. The problem is created on the following basis. The person who yearns for some fulfilment in life has to be active towards that personality. But being impotent, his effort proves to be futile. Hence the problem is how to convert human activity into a potent instrument to secure the coveted result.

Gīta was not a scripture for a saint or to a man who renounce the world. It was considered by the *Vaiṣṇava* scholars of the period as equally useful for leading the society on a path of progress and harmony. It was under these circumstances that Rāmānuja made it a point to contact the best mind of the age and found in Goṣṭhīpūrṇa, a scholar and a teacher who could quench the thirst for true knowledge⁵¹.

Rāmānuja was confronted, like many seekers of the period, with fundamental but irreconcilable notions which had relevance in the realm of society. The notion was that human effort was a necessary instrument to secure the reward which might be material or metaphysical. Another notion was that the human being in spite of his individual effort to realise his ends, was a helpless dependent on the Supreme spirit, which controlled and guided the entire Cosmos and which could be identified with the cosmic force. As such, individual effort, according to the second notion, was as useless as inaction. Rāmānuja was puzzled as to the nature of the true notion and its utility to society, because in the social affairs of society, individuals in various capacities confronted the same contradictions. Hence it was natural for Rāmānuja to clear this doubt before he launched the programme of upliftment.

The meeting of Goṣṭhīpūrṇa and Rāmānuja forms an interesting episode, (in the history of society) particularly, as it was related to the relationship between a good teacher and an anxious student. Just because Rāmānuja approached him, Goṣṭhīpūrṇa did not show immediately any inclination to solve the contradictions in the mind of the student. Goṣṭhīpūrṇa was a far advanced scholar. He had a strong desire to convey the central truth, but before he could impart the knowledge, he wanted to know whether Rāmānuja was fit enough to receive it. Was the urge in Rāmānuja genuine? Could he fulfill and implement the knowledge gained thus? These were some of the questions that tormented the mind of the *ācārya*. The forces which mould human society and the reaction of man to values in life have to be determined only on an intuitive basis. Only then systematic knowledge becomes possible. This required enormous devotion and continuous study. Goṣṭhīpūrṇa feared that there was the possibility of subjecting this intuitive knowledge to abuse. The true significance of social virtue could be appreciated from the intuitive⁵² stand which is termed *Divyacakṣus* (the divine eyes) in the Bhagavad-gīta. Like a true teacher, therefore, he wanted Rāmānuja to prove his earnestness and seriousness. He expected

from Rāmānuja that the latter would not subject the message to careless and perverse treatment. The whole episode probably left a deep imprint on the mind of the student, who when he emerged as a teacher himself, adopted some of these good principles of Goṣṭhipūrṇa. Only after a clear assurance and test Rāmānuja was able to get the message.

Goṣṭhipūrṇa put forward before Rāmānuja a few important principles, which later on guided the socio-religious movement of Rāmānuja in South India. Those principles were as religious as they were social. They were also fundamental for the harmony and the very survival of society. One such principle emphasised the importance of rituals and prayers in the life of a seeker in society. It is well known that in the history of socio-religious movement in India various reformers from Buddha to Rāmānuja had, in their zeal to reform society, attached the ritualistic forms and stressed more the ethical side of human existence in the social environment. Quite contrary to, but not wholly opposed to his view Goṣṭhipūrṇa pointed out to Rāmānuja that *Yāgas* (rituals), *Yagnas* (worship) or ceremonies, prayers and singing devotional songs were all essential and would assist the individual to make progress along the path of culture. Certainly the rituals and ceremonies were helpful to condition the behaviour and tame the animal instinct in man. Another principle that was taught by Goṣṭhipūrṇa was that the rituals and prayers would move the divine force to enlighten the devotees. The whole idea was conceived as a co-operative task in which the divine force and the devotee acted as partners. Yet another principle was that divinity was Supreme and so such, man was entirely under its control, whether knowingly or unknowingly man acts in society only with the influence of the Cosmic Force. The concept of *Kainkarya* was particularly emphasised by Goṣṭhipūrṇa. It was a form of service and also a form of behaviour. He told Rāmānuja that the concept of service was very subtle and it was likely to be misunderstood and abused, resulting in confusion and choose among the masses, if it was not properly applied. That was why Goṣṭhipūrṇa insisted that these principles of the Gita were to be employed only by a few individuals who had abiding faith in them—

*"Idam te nātāpaskaya nābhaktaya kadācana
na Cā śusrusave dadyāt nacamam yobhya Sūyati"*⁵³

This given to you should not be given to the indisciplined or

the undevoted, nor to one who does, not serve the master, never to one who is jealous, at any time.

The purport of the above is, that wealth in undeserving hands goes waste.

Generous Attitude

Disclosing the Message to the Public : Rāmānuja took the vow of secrecy before his *ācārya* and pledged that he would welcome the worst punishment in life in case he did not keep up the pledge. But as soon as he returned from the Master's house, he saw in the temple nearby a large gathering of people by accident, for there was no special occasion for them to gather. On seeing them, Rāmānuja was moved to such an extent that he preferred to incur the wrath of the master. He was moved this pitch by the plight of the gathering which, according to him, would continue to be under the spell of gloom and despair in the absence of the elevating and enlightening message that he was fortunate to get from his *ācārya*. He thought that it was better to welcome hell even by proving faithless to the master than keep the message for himself. He passed on the message of comfort to the gathering and thus paved the way for the happiness of persons gathered there⁵⁴. This notion of love of the neighbour in preference to love of one's own self marked Rāmānuja's status in society. The teacher who came to know of the conduct of the student was thrilled to observe this singular outlook and attitude. He hugged the pupil, exclaiming at the same time that he was a being with a divine outlook and attitude. Rāmānuja was known as *Emberumānār*⁵⁵—the Lord within my reach—a title conferred by the *ācārya* on the pupil.

Rāmānuja felt that if the message was misunderstood by the unthinking people and if the doctrine was abused, there might be turmoil and dismay which had to be guarded against. But the whole world did not deserve to be condemned. There might be a few who would profit by the message. In a mixed world clarity and confusion co-exist. People wishing for clarity might not miss the opportunity to lead a clean and noble life with the help of the message which he obtained from the master under very difficult conditions.

Discipline—Social and Personal

The Scope of Caste Discipline—Marṇanarīnāmbi : After realising the principles that were taught by Goṣṭhipurṇa, Rāmānuja found

another occasion to solve another riddle, namely, the status of the doctrine of discipline and the doctrine of service in society. These two doctrines appeared opposed to each other. But Rāmānuja learnt through an incident that those two doctrines were not conflicting, but complementary to each other and were essential for the foundation of the society. The discipline could be relaxed on exceptional occasions. As if to solve this riddle, a situation presented itself in which Māhāpūrṇa behaved in a quaint way. Among the disciples of the great Yāmunācārya, was one by name Māranērinambi. He did not belong to the group privileged to study the Sanskrit *Veda*. But he was admitted to the fold of Yāmunācārya and he obtained enlightenment from the master which in quality was not different from that imparted to the privileged group of pupils. Śrī Yāmuna was so impressed with the behaviour and outlook of his 'unprivileged pupil' that he regarded him as a previous specimen of the divinely shaped. He directed Māhāpūrṇa that this particular pupil of his should not be left in the hands of his physical kinsman who were not qualified to claim the kinship. because of their way of life which was wholly looking in discipline and decency. He directed that, should Maranērinambi expire, his mortal remains should be accorded the treatment which was permissible to the very few enlightened and sanctified souls. The treatment is called *Brahmamedha Sainikāra*⁵⁵ (the method of disposing the earthly remains of the philosopher), to which not all brahmins are entitled. This idea was contained in the master's statement to Mahāpūrṇa—

“*Puroḍaśathai naykku idade kollum*”⁵⁷.

Do not throw the holy offering to the stray our.

Following the intention of the master Mahāpūrṇa performed the last rites personally when Maranērinambi expired. This act appears violative of the prescription laid down in the *Vedas* in which caste discipline is inviolable.

When Rāmānuja sought an explanation for the deviation in the behaviour of his master, an answer came which was based on two aspects of life. They were—the comfort loving and higher pursuit in life. Mahāpūrṇa explained the distinction between the two. He said that privilege of comfort kept men ever in enlightened bondage. It pushed them into a life of unending passion and prejudice. The caste system, he declared, served as a shield against the conquest of the mind by external forces which were mainly of material value.

As such, the second aspect which was positive in character was more important and it was ever lasting. Rāmānuja was told that there existed a link between the All Controlling Power and the wandering individual. As a member of society every individual should strive hard to realise this link which had occupied a very important place in the life of man. In short, Māhāpūrṇa's argument was based on the fact that the caste discipline was confined to the material frame of social life. But the spiritual system was above this material frame. Between the two the spiritual system was superior and hence it was to be recognised in proper perspective. Therefore, the act of Māhāpūrṇa performing the last rites of his classmate was in tune with this outlook of life. He had given importance to spiritual stature rather than the individual's traditional rank in social set-up. It was in no way a violation of the *Varnadharma* (caste based obligation). In order to drive home this principle, Mahāpūrṇa reminded Rāmānuja of an incident in the Rāmāyana, where Rāma without any hesitation performed the last rites of Jatāyu which was a bird. Hence, according to Mahāpūrṇa, what was important was spiritual equality with discipline as a guiding force. As applied to society, this principle accepted diversity as a factor in society which could not be levelled or equalised by any force. However, he did not mean that there was no meeting ground amidst diversity. The aim of society should be uniform, but the paths might be different. Each individual according to his own status or rank in social structure should strive hard to reach this goal. Hence, equality meant equality of opportunities, but not destroying the traditional system of organisation. Diversity did not prevent mingling, also it did not mean divorce from the various kinds of forces which were operating in society. This was the sociophilosophical principle that Rāmānuja learnt from his *ācārya*, which impressed him.

Rāmānuja's sojourn to Kashmir

Yāmunācārya, teacher of Rāmānuja, had expounded a new approach to the study of the *Vedānta* in the contemporary period. His views on the *Vedāntic* message on life and reality radically differed from the views of other thinkers in the field. In this connection, Yāmuna wanted to know whether the *Vedāntic* thought as understood by him was in conformity with the exposition of the same by Badarāyaṇa who was the author of the *Brahma Sūtras*. This work was considered to be an authority on the subject by every

thinker. In order to realize this objective, the only way for Yāmuna was to go to Kashmir which was the foremost seat of learning at that time. Unfortunately Yāmuna's wish was never fulfilled. It became the mission of Rāmānuja to visit Kashmir for the purpose of comparing the views of Yāmuna with those of Bhadarāyaṇa's Brahmasūtras. It is under these circumstances Rāmānuja undertook the historic journey. He was accompanied by his pupil Kūrēṣa. While he was in Kashmir, he got access to the comprehensive work entitled 'Bodhayana Vṛitti'⁵⁸. He found that his interpretation of the *Upaniṣadic* term *Kap̥yāsa* was in perfect tune with the traditional view. Thus the sojourn in Kashmir was a success from the point of view of Rāmānuja's intellectual appetite which was appropriately quenched there.

The composition of the Śrī Bhāṣya

Rāmānuja and Kūrēṣa : The result of his visit to Kashmir was the composition of the Śrī Bhāṣya which has been considered as one of the greatest works on Indian Philosophical thought which has a far-reaching influence on Indian society. After his study of Bodhāyana's Vṛitti on Brahmasūtra, he was convinced that the thoughts of Yāmuna and this work were in agreement with each other. He therefore, decided to interpret the *Vedānta Sūtras* as understood by him. In this task Rāmānuja adopted the synthetic and the objective way. He followed the path set out by the eminent scholars of earlier times. To Rāmānuja, pure tradition was a sanctifying force. He never reproached tradition, but he wanted to harmonise his thoughts and discoveries with the ancient living tradition. That was not what he destroyed. His main aim in writing Śrī Bhāṣya was to conserve what was best in the Indian *Vedāntic* tradition. However, it did not mean that he accepted everything at face value. He put everything that was in tradition to rigorous scrutiny and never hesitated to reject what was not in conformity with the main flow of tradition. He broke the existing dogmatic convention to establish the healthy convention this was one aspect of social service rendered by Rāmānuja. In this sense his work was synthetic and objective. Synthetic because the new thought that he discovered as a result of his reflective attitude was linked up and synthesised with the pure tradition. It was objective because he gave rational explanation to the idea he said and wrote. He viewed his subject from a detached point of view.

Rāmānuja as a Synthesiser

As a great synthesiser Rāmānuja co-ordinated the thoughts contained in *Vedānta* and the *Drāvida-Vedānta*, and coined a new word called *Ubhaya-Vedānta*, *vedānta* put much stress on personal elevation and individual salvation. On the other hand, the *Ubhaya-vedānta* as interpreted by Rāmānuja emphasised the concept of *Kainkarya* or service to society. It was not enough if an individual tried to uplift himself and attain *Mokṣa* (Final Release). Rāmānuja demonstrated in his writings and in his life the principle of *Kainkarya* or elevation of society through service. Since they were not opposite ideas, both were essential. They were like two sides of the same coin. The stress on the one and the rejection of the other would lead to lop-sided development. That was why Rāmānuja presented an integrated approach in his writings and teachings. If a person merely thinks of his own elevation either in the material or the spiritual sense, he would ultimately end up in egoistic outlook. But if he strives for the upliftment of his immediate social environment, it would not only broaden his outlook but lead to an integral life. Rāmānuja's philosophy as described in the 'Śrī Bhāṣya' was not mere speculative metaphysical principles, but is had relevance to problems of social interests. In this sense Rāmānuja carved out a new path. He never rejected the wordly life or material existence of society, but he criticised too much indulgence in this aspect of life. For a harmonious existence there should be a link between the individual, the society and the Supreme Force. The individual should not forget that he is dependent on him and true life consists in harmonising the principles of life for all times. The emphasis on either one of the two would result in imbalance, instability and misery.

The *Upaniṣads* are primarily concerned with the method of disowning contact with the material world—that is the goal or *mokṣa* (Final Release) envisaged. The *Drāvida Vedānta*, on the other hand, emphasised the need for undisturbed wareness of the direct link of the *Cetana* (soul) with the Supreme Spirit and to the extent to which material link emerges as a hinderance the desire for deliverance is kept up. It is only in the latter view, that the direct relationship should not be subordinated to the assumed relationship which exists between the *cetana* and the *a-cetana*. The concept of service or *Kainkarya* figures as a function vital to the nature of the *cetana*. This doctrine is emphasised and elaborated in the *Drāvida Vedānta* and is also found in the *Upaniṣads*. Service is projected in

its crude form as the concept of '*Karma*' confined only to the process of personal elevation. This point has been clearly stated in the *maṇipravāḷa* classic of *Abhiramavara*⁵⁹.

' *Karma Kainkaryangal, nitya nityā satyā*
Satya varṇa dasyanugunangal'"

Karma and *Kainkarya*, accord respectively with the eternal and the non-eternal, with the changing and the unchanging and with the physical and the spiritual temperament.

Hence *Kainkarya* which is the mark of spiritual consideration is by far superior to *Karma* which has a direct reference to the physical frame of spirit. In other words, *Karma* cleared of all its impurities emerges as *Kainkarya*, *Karma* is the crudent from of *Dāsyā* (service prompted by love). *Karma* is a means, where as service is life's normal behaviour. Śrī Bhāṣya incorporated the principles mentioned above. In the task of composing it, Rāmānuja utilised the services of Kūrēśa, who acted as a scribe.

The limitation of the Teacher

Before proceeding to write the Śrī Bhāṣya, Rāmānuja cautioned Kūrēśa not to write in blind faith on the consideration that the master was an unrivalled master of the subject⁶⁰. To do justice to the subject, the role of the master should not be over-emphasised. Being an individual no person can claim full valldity for his personal ability and assessment of truth. Time honoured tradition has secured the status of supreme sanctity being based on the real nature of the object and appreciated and acclaimed by numerous critics and seers in all times. To miss this point of unswerving loyalty to the objective aspect of experience and its normal pomp and promise and to permit the whim of any individual, however great he may be, to paint the objective truth is an intellectual crime deserving condemnation and repudication at all hands. Kūrēśa very much appreciated and admired the spirit of discipline evinced by his *ācārya*. The work of Śrī Bhāṣya proceeded smoothly upto a point when for reasons unknown, Rāmānuja described the concept of the *cetana* (soul) not quite in conformity with its nature of *apṛahakṣiddhi*. Kūrēśa stopped writing. He disobeyed the matter apparently in obedience to him. Kūrēśa would not express the flaw he discovered in the master. For he sincerely felt that the master was a scholar of rare ability and the pupil was not worthily equipped to expose the flaw. He felt he was unable to appreciate the aignificance

of what he thought was an incorrect remark. He therefore thought that silence on his part would serve the purpose of helping the master to reframe his thought or to reiterate it upon second thought. An anecdote⁶¹ cited here in this connection throws light on the character of Kūrēśa as a pupil without a match. This anecdote is in connection with the framing of the definition of the concept of *cetana*. *Cetana* as an intelligent entity is other than the *a-cetana* (non mental) or the material entity. *Cetana* being dependent on and meant for the sake of the Supreme in service is looked upon as *śeṣa* or an entity meant only for service with no tinge of selfishness. Since both the *cetana* and the *a-cetana* are the common dependents, the doctrine of 'existence for service'—*śeṣatva* (the nature of the *śeṣa*) is of primary significance. The sentient nature of the *cetana* is only to distinguish it from the *a-cetana* and not to claim any privilege beyond service on the ground that the mental equipment makes it resemble the Supreme Spirit.

Rāmānuja felt a doubt here. Empirically the knowledge aspect deserves prominence, but fundamentally it yields place to the service aspect. The solution suggested in the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* is that the *cetana* is primarily regarded as *Adiven* an entity engaged in service only. Intelligent variety also utilised in service by the expression *Uṇarun* a mental entity.

The idea according to Rāmānuja would be that the *cetana* is dependent on the Supreme and therefore on a par in status with the *a-cetana*, but it differs from the *a-cetana* because it is *cetana*, a mental entity possessing the feature of knowledge confined to the region of service.

Śrī Yāmuna in his '*Satotra-Ratna*'—a philosophic treatise in poetic garh observes⁶².

*Yadyā Śramāvadhi Yathāmati
Vāpi asaaktaḥ staumi, evameva
Kalu tepi sadā stitvantaḥ
Vedāḥ caturmukha mukha ca
Maharṇayāntaḥ ko majjātāḥ
anu kulācala yoh viśesaḥ"*

Frail as I am, I indulge in praying to the Almighty. So, Almighty. So do the great and mighty namely the *Vedas* the first child of God, Brahma and others of high calibre. The result being the same between us all. The great mountain.

and a small pebble defy any attempt to ignore inequality. But they are treated alike when they are immersed in deep ocean.

The message of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* is worth recording here—Naciketas, an adventurer in the field of enquiry with a firm resolve never to let go his efforts till he succeeded in reaching the truth, was informed that all his excellence amounted to nothing. Only the grace of the Supreme power would help him in his progress. This proves that Naciketas, the celebrated *Upaniṣadic* hero and the negligible ignoramus crawling on the earth are both powerless, as far as the attempt to grasp Brahman by personal endeavour is concerned.

Rāmānuja deputed his pupil to approach his master Gōsthipūrṇa and get the true version. Implicitly obeying the master, Kūrēṣa moved from Śrīrangam to meet Gōsthipūrṇa the master's master. He is said to have taken the trip eighteen times, because the master was not available. In the last trip the master is reported to have cleared the doubt in a very casual way with the direction to refer to the two stanzas and their sequence in the famous work of *Tiruvāimoli*—*Sāmaveda* section of the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* occurring in Stanzas 2 and 3 in the 8th decade of the 8th section. On receiving the guidance from the master through Kūrēṣa, Rāmānuja felt that absence of alertness even for a second would be enough to do irreparable damage to truth. He quickly corrected himself and projected the concept of the *cetana* emphasising its functional nature as more essential than its intellectual stature. In other words, the worth of an individual is determined by the quality of service he renders. Usefulness to society is the mark of merit. Kūrēṣa continued the task of writing and sometime later the famous classic of Śrī Bhāṣya was completed.

The incident that took place during the composition of Śrī Bhāṣya, namely, Kūrēṣa's doubt regarding a statement of Rāmānuja indicates the personality of Rāmānuja as a teacher. In this connection he stands out in contrast with his former guru Yādavaprakāśa, who, it may be recalled here, had snubbed him, when the former questioned the interpretation of the latter. Kūrēṣa was not an ordinary scribe merely copying the words of the master. He had his own abilities as a scholar. In the most obedient manner Kūrēṣa brought to the notice of Rāmānuja the flaw in his interpretation. Without hesitation Rāmānuja agreed to the silent disagreement of

the scribe. He was in a position to clear the doubt himself. But he felt that it was better to consult another authority on the subject and at the same time to show to Kūrēṣa that he was not interested in the personality cult or personal domination. That was why Kūrēṣa was sent to consult Gōsthīpūrṇa to clear the doubt. It only reveals humility on the part of Rāmānuja and the respectful obedience and not blind obedience on the part of Kūrēṣa. The event is certainly interesting and speaks of higher qualities of Rāmānuja as a teacher and Kūrēṣa as a model disciple of the twelfth century. Ramanuja had shown in action what the *ācārya* wanted others to practise.

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2. Perumāl Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, Śrīvaiṣṇava Grantha Mudra-pika Sabha, Kānchi, 1910, P. 407
3. *Ibid*, P. 216.
4. Gopinath Rao, T.A. : *Sri Subrahmanya Ayyar Lectures on the History of Śrīvaiṣṇavas*, Madras, 1917, P. 14.
5. Amudanār : *Rāmānuja Nuṭṭandādi*, Rāmānuja Granthamala, Kānchi, 1903.
6. Amudanar : *Op. Cit.*, verse 3.
7. *Ibid*, verse 4.
8. *Note* : Mahabūtapuri—The word Mahabūtapuri indicates a city inhabited by Mahabūtas or great men steeped in the knowledge of the absolute. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* distinguishes between being and non-being. A person who has the knowledge of Brahman as his inner-self is said to be existent—Bhūta. One who does not possess this knowledge is said to be non-existent-abhūta. The exact words used in this connection in the *Upaniṣad* are *sat* and *asat* respectively. The word *sat* is synonymous with Bhūta. *Mahabhūta* is one who retains this knowledge throughout one's life (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*—Section-Anandavalli).
9. Gopinath Rao : *Sri Subrahmanya Ayyar Lectures on the History of Śrīvaiṣṇavas*, P. 9.
10. Surendranath Dasgupta : *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1968, Vol. III, P. 100.
11. *Note* : *Pada-chāyā* : It may be of interest to note in this connection the significance of the statement 'Aham Brahma Asmi' which means 'I am Brahman'. The common man starts his life with the basic notion that he is the one to be counted as supreme and all others should subserve his interest. This is the attitude during the period of persistent ignorance. As a reward for true education leading to full enlightenment the expression 'Aham Brahma Asmi' is used to describe the enlightened man. Facing God the enlightened man announces 'Aham Brahma Asmi'. The intention

is not identity of essence but non-difference (*Aprthak-Siddhi*). The word 'Aham does not contain anything in substance or quality not covered by Brahman. The enlightened person feels totally subordinate like the shadow. The ambition of man is to achieve absolute independence—that is the start in life. When the goal is reached the realisation is absoluteness in dependence. This is the interpretation of Śrī Rāmānuja. The term 'Pada-cchāya' contains the notion of absolute dependence on the master.

12. C.f. Amudanar : Op. Cit., verse 1.
13. Alvars : *Divya Prabhandam*, Kancipuram, 1971, Tiruvaimoli, II-9-9.
14. Dasagupta, S : *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, P. 101 Sri Perumbudur : A Village in Chenglepat, District, Madras Presidency.
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16. Manu : *Manusmṛiti*, London, 1825, Adhyaya VI, verses 89-90.
17. *Ibid*, verses 229.
18. Manu : *Manusmṛiti*, London, 1825, Adhyaya III, verses 77-78.
19. Gopinath Rao : *Sri Subramanya Ayyar Lectures on the History of Śrīvaiṣnavas*, 1917, Madras, p. 9.
Govindacharyaswamin A : *Life of Rāmānuja*, P. 29.
Srinivasa Iyengar : *The Life and Teachings of Śrī Rāmānujācārya*, Madras, 1908, Pages 46-47.
20. Pillai Lokam Jiyar : *Yatindra Pravara Prabhāva*, Śrīvaiṣnava Grantha Nava Mudrapaka Sabha, Kanchi, 1910, Section on Pillai Lokācārya, P. 47.
Note: This doctrine of going beyond the conventional bounds for elevation and enlightenment was utilised by an ācārya of the fourteenth century by name Śrī Śailanātha. This great brahmin scholar sought precious knowledge from a scholar by name Vilāmośolai-Pillai, whose work *Sapta-gadha* condensed the philosophy of the Śrīvacanabhusana of Lokācārya (13th Century).
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22. *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* : Ramakrishna Math, 1949, Madras, Brahmanandavalli Section II, Anuvaka, 1.
Srinivasa Iyengar C R. : *The Life and Teachings of Śrī Rāmānujācārya*, P. 47.
23. Rāmānuja : *Śrī Bhāṣya*, I Pada, 7th Adhikarna, P. 327.
24. Rāmānuja : *Śrī Bhāṣya*, Section 164, P. 204, Section 167, P. 208.
25. *Ibid*, *Chandogya Upaniṣad* : III, 14-1, P. 1019.
Govindacharyaswamin : *Life of Rāmānuja*, P. 43.
Andrapurna : *Yatirāja Vaibhavan*, Sarasvatī Mudrakshara Shala, Madras, 1877, verse 12, P. 184.
26. Perumal Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvan*, P. 219.
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28. Kumari Sumita Ācārya : *Yāska's Nirukta Bhāṣya*, Arya Kanya Gurukula, Delhi, Vikrama era 2033, I Part, Page 3.
29. Srinivasa Iyengar C.R. : *The Life and Teachings of Śrī Rāmānujācārya*, PP. 49-50.
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31. Andhrapūrṇa : *Yatirāja Vāibhavam*, P. 51.
Govindacharyaswamin A. : *Life of Rāmānujācārya*, P. 36.
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37. Gopinath Rao : *Sri Subrahmanya Ayyar Lectures on the History of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas*, P. 9.
38. Andhrapurna : *Yatirāja Vāibhavam*, verses 39, 40, 41, P. 186.
Perumāl Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhavam*, P. 347.
39. Perumāl Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhavam*, P. 245
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41. Gopinath Rao : *Sri Subrahmanya Ayyar Lectures on the History of Śrīvaiṣṇavism*, P. 9.
42. Srinivasa Iyengar : *The Life and Teachings of Śrī Rāmānujācārya*, P. 88.
Note : *Pancasamskāra* : *Pañcasamskāra* is different from *Samskāra* (efficacy) prescribed to enter upon the *Vedic* studies. The *Vedic* studies lay emphasis on the mode of effecting release from the material attachment which prevents the joy arising out of the eternal association with the Supreme Being. The atyle is based on the assumption that joy is spiritual association and the material attachment is misery. The *Pancasamskāra*, on the other hand, is based on the thought that the association of the finite self with the Supreme Being is eternal and imperishable and the material interest gets transformed itself into an abiding interest and an attitude of opportunity for services to the exclusion of seeking pleasure. This thought is applicable to one and all of the finite selves. It revives. It revives the eternal spirit of optimism in life by transcending the narrow self-egotism and moving on to the highest plane of joyful subervience to the Supreme and to the world directly linked to the Supreme. At this *Upantsadic* level what is discarded is the material world. At the *Rahasya* level that is discarded is the unten-

able self-importance in the world set-up. The self engages itself in an act of self-refinement and elevation to perfection through the process of *Karma* leading to *Jñāna*, *Bhakti* and finally *Prapatti*. It is the protective measure employed by the finite self and in consequence there is no scope or occasion for service or *Kainkarya* as understood in the *Vādānta*. According to the inner import of the *Upanisad*, the protective part of activity is the exclusive monopoly of the Supreme Being which is the only principle for the emergence, endurance and exit of both the mental and the material part of the Cosmos. This finite self is constrained to employ its activity not for protection but to the only other purpose—namely service. In the light of this understanding the doctrine of *Prapatti* does not provide opportunity for the finite self to enter into the protective activity.

The *Pāñcasamskāra* is intimately connected with the life based on the inner interpretation of the *Upanisads* emphasising the kinship between the finite self and the absolute. It is listed in the following verse :

“*Tāpaḥ Pañditaḥ tatthānāma
Mantra yāgaśca pancamaḥ*”

The initiation of the *Śrīvaiṣṇavas* is based upon these five Sacraments or *Panchasamakāras* viz. :

- (i) *Tāpa* or branding on the two shoulders with the marks of *Śaṅkha* (conch) and the *Chakra* (disc), the emblems of Vishnu;
- (ii) *Pundra* or two white lines (of a sort of white clay) on the forehead, with a red line of powder saffron etc., in the middle. They should be marked in the eleven other places of the body, three on the stomach one on the chest, two on the shoulders, three on the neck and two on the back. These twelve marks should be borne every day and are called by the twelve names of Vishnu, Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Madhava, Govinda, Vishnu, Madhusudhana, Trivikrama, Vamana, Śrīdhara, Hṛishikeśa, Padmanābha and Lāmodara;
- (iii) *Nāma* to bear the names of Vishnu and one should be called by those names only;
- (iv) *Mantras* which are taught by the *guru* at the time of the initiation. The *Mantras* of Viṣṇu are various. These *mantras* are taught to everyone at the time of his initiation. This initiation can be obtained by any one of any caste, even a *Mleecha* or *Chandala*—and he becomes a *Vaiṣṇava*. *Vaiṣṇavas* should recite *mantras* a certain number of times every day;
- (v) *Yoga* or worship of certain idols of Vishnu which is taught at the time of initiation by the *gurus*, presenting one idol to the disciple for his worship and thence the disciple should worship it and no other.

43. Govindacharyaswamin A. : *Op.cit.*, P. 68.

44. Gopinath Rao : *Sri Subrahmanyam Ayyars Lectures on the History of Śrīvaiṣṇava*, P. 10.

45. *Note : Tiruvāimoli*—The term Tiruvāimoli means the language of the sacred utterance. It is equated with the famous *Chandogya Upanisads* of Vedānta. In form and context there are three other works belonging to the category of Tiruvāimoli corresponding to the other three parts of the Veda namely, the *Rg*, the *Yajur* and the *Atharvan*. This is a part of the *Sāmaveda*. The main subject-matter of the *Drāvida Veda* is the nature of the Absolute as the sole Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the Cosmos, the sportive aim of activity of the Absolute and the use to which the material world has to be put in that context which is looked upon as the *Upakarana* or instrument to be used in the service of the Lord. If the Sanskrit section of the Veda prescribes the way to be unaffected by the world, the Tamil section prescribes the way to utilise everything for service. On this account the system of Rāmānuja's philosophy has come to be recognised as '*Ubhayavedānta*'.
46. Nambīlār—*Bhagavadvīṣyam—IDU* (Commentary on Tiruvāimoli), Madras, 1873, Vols. II, III.
47. Āndhrapūrṇa : *Yatirāja Vaibhavam*, verse 63, P. 187.
48. Vālmiki : *Rāmāyana* : Asthanavidvamsa (ed.), Mysore, 1913, VI, 107, the Section is termed *Aditya Hṛdayam*.
49. Bhagavad-gīta : (ed.), Annagracharya, P.B., Kāñchi, 1903 XVIII, verse 61.
Rāmānuja : Śrī Bhāṣya, Invocatory verse.
50. *Bhagavad-gīta*, VII, verse 14.
51. Govindacharyaswamin A. : *Life of Rāmānujācārya*, P. 94.
Srinivasa Iyengar : *The Life and Teachings of Śrī Rāmānujācārya*, PP. 117-122.
52. *Note : Intuition* : In the central view, as opposed to the side view, of the Dravidian term '*Mayarvara Madinalam*'. Knowledge free from flaw and undetached from the source. (Tiruvāimoli; ii i-1-1).
53. *Bhagavad-gīta* : XVIII, verse 67.
54. Govindacharyaswamin A. : *Life of Rāmānujācārya*, P. 97.
55. *Note : Emburumanār—Perumān is Brahman*. It connotes the quality of magnifying.
56. Perumāl Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, P. 329.
57. Govindacharyaswamin A. : *Life of Rāmānujācārya*, P. 167.
Āndhrapūrṇa, op.cit., P. 37.
58. Perumāl Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, PP. 317-318.
59. Nāyanār : *Ācārya Hṛdaya of Rāmānuja Matruguru* (ed.), Srinivasa Raghavachar, Kalaratnakara Press, Madras, 1906, Prakaraṇa 1, Sūtra 26.
Pillal Lokācārya : *Munuksuppadi, Carmaralaka*, Section—Karma Kain-karyattile Pugum—Sūtra 282.
60. Govindacharyaswamin A. : *Life of Ramanujacarya*, P. 134.
61. Ālvāra : *Divyaprabandam : Tiruvaimoli*, IV-X-5.
62. *Yamuna Muni : Stotra Ratna* (ed.), Annagracharya P B Rāmānuja-granthamala, Kanchipuram, 1917, verse 8.

CHAPTER III

Rāmānuja's Attitude Towards Society and its Behaviour

The Basis for a New Outlook—Asceticism Not Anti-Social—The Enduring Distinguished From the Fleeting—Humanistic Evaluation of the Social System—The Dynamic Role of an Ascetic—Service Outlook—Society Treated as a Field of Service—Asceticism as a Potent Tool of Service to Society—Society a Blend of Savage and Saintly Traits—Dedication to Tame Savagery—Rough and Refined forms of Life—The Potency of Prayer and Compassion.

The basis for a new Outlook

It is clear from the previous chapter that Rāmānuja's place as a social reformer was the product of his social up-bringing, training in the ancient lore and contact with the great minds of the period. Social association in determined by purpose. Contact is therefore selective. It is not indiscriminately brought about by blind, instinctive urge. The impact of the *Drāviḍa Veda* of Saṭhakopa and others is significant. Saṭhakopa, Parakāla, and Yogivāha are not of the top class in the caste-order. But they are regarded as unfailing leaders far ahead of the celebrated seers or *ṛṣis* of Vedic fame. The glory of Rāmānuja is traced to his devotion to Saṭhakopa and the other *Āḷvārs* (Saints) and their followers, the earlier *ācāryas* (seers), viz., Madhurakavi, Nāthamuni and Yāmuna.¹ Kulaśekhara, one of the *Āḷvāra* observes thus—

“*Aḍi śūḍum araśat allāl*
Arasāga eṇṇen marṭu arasu”.²

I regard the feet of the Lord on my head as the crown proclaiming my sovereignty. No other symbol of sovereignty attracts me.

Sovereignty is the privilege of exercising the inherent power at will and without any check. In this case wearing the feet of the

Lord on the head symbolises the sovereignty of service. This is symbolic of the maxim that service is sovereignty. Here the distinction between the temporal crown and the religious crown is emphasised. The latter is preferred as it is a lasting feature. The flower taken from the feet of Pāṇperumāl adorns the head of Rāmānuja, observes Amudanār. Pāṇperumāl is Yogivāha. Śaṭhakopa recognizes in the series of the adorable devotees of the Lord, and the idea was accepted by Rāmānuja later, even those who may be considered in the world as *Caṇḍālas* among the *Caṇḍālas*.³

Toṇḍar-aḍi-p-podi, another *Āḷvār* from the Brahmin fold, administers a warning to the top class of society. A person may be an authority on the *Vedas* and *Vedāṅgas*. He may be the most esteemed of the devotees by birth and behaviour. If, by any chance, he despises any sincere devotee, he will hurl himself that very moment down to the level of the wretched with no hope of recovery.⁴

Another *Āḷvār* by name Munivāhana observes that the Lord rises above Himself when He employs man to serve the devotees.⁵ Yāmunācārya, following Kulaśekhara, prefers sub-human life in good company to the exalted position in a damaging environment.⁶ The principle which governs the ambition of the great is the power of 'character' *ātma-śīla* to the exclusion of self-aggrandisement, *āḍambara*. Following this principle, envisaged in the *Veda* and emphasised by the *Āḷvār* the early batch of Rāmānuja's followers followed this system of life in society. The two classical works *Śrīvacanabhuṣaṇa* and *Ācārya Hrdaya* are the codification of philosophic behaviour in the social set-up. The two works rank in status with the classical works of Rāmānuja. From the Tamil point of view, they are what the classical works of Vedāntadēśika (*Śatadūṣaṇi*, for instance), in Sanskrit, to establish the theistic trend of the *Advaita Vedānta*.

The social upbringing is not to be understood in the modern sense of mixing with members outside the community and developing a taste and temperament as a result of the contact. The *Vedas* refer to different kinds of aim in life and the means to be adopted towards that end. The society to which Rāmānuja belonged was *Śrīvaiṣṇava* in outlook and habit. At that time Rāmānuja was not aware of any scholar who could point to the rationale behind the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* belief about life and value which then seemed to Rāmānuja a dogma. He could not get the *Vedānta*

support to the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* convention from the scholars to whose fold he belonged. The unsatisfactory environment and the inner desire for an outlook on life which would convincingly keep him untouched by depression and disappointment forced Rāmānuja to obtain the solution from outside his fold.

The influence on him was not confined to any physical association with groups of people. The gap between the sermon and practice was enough to influence his alert and dynamic mind. As a person who believed in the conservation of ancient thought and system free from contamination, Rāmānuja tried to interpret afresh social assignments, *Varṇāśrama dharma* and the role of ascetic life in society. He retained a lively contact with society. The present day notion of social reform or evolution appears to lay emphasis on the sanctity of man-to-man relationship overriding all considerations that may disqualify man from coningling. If, on the other hand, socialism is an active effort to elevate mankind to command esteem and affection, the process does involve an element of restraint on the part of the forward member lest he would lose his foot-hold in life and becomes unable to assist the backward to leap forward. This applies at all levels—food and bed, the casual aim in life and which expects to maintain dignity as a worthy member of society.

The opportunity to meet men of renown and ability was not missed by Rāmānuja. In this venture he moved from one scholar to another. The change in outlook was regarding the value attached to the *Varṇa* (Caste) and *āśramas* (stages). He never attempted to abolish them as they were integral to social life, not mere conventions introduced by mutual agreement.

Asceticism not Anti-social

Regarding *Sanyāsa* about which much confusion still prevails, the *Bhagavad-gīta* is cited with approval.

*"Kāmyānām karmaṇām nyāsam
Sanyāsam kavayo viduḥ"*⁷

Withdrawing from acts with a motive is renunciation or asceticism as the wise have held.

Rāmānuja's commentary on the above verse—

*"Varṇāśrama-vihitam-karma
madārādhana-rūpatayā kāryam
svayam-prayojanam iti matvā"*⁸



The performance associated with *Varṇa* and *aśrama*, the castes and their stages, must be done with the knowledge that they are in the nature of worship a reverential function with no extra promise.

Asceticism is refraining from acts with a selfish motive. Disengaging from acts to secure personal gains is, in the opinion of *Sanyāsa*—ascetism. Another statement in the same work has this to say about act—

“*Na hi kascit kṣaṇam api
Jātutiṣṭhati akarma—kṛt
Kāryate hi avaśaḥ karma
Sarvaḥ prakṛtijaiḥ guṇaiḥ*”.⁹

No one can exist at any time, even for a second, without any activity. Irresistably, by the forces of nature every being is compelled to act.

Rāmānuja comments thus—

“*Evam kṛtyamāṇeṣu
Karmasu kartṛtvādi-parityagah
Śāstra-siddaḥ sanyāsaḥ
Sa eva tyāgaḥ iti ukto bhavati*”.¹⁰

Thus in respect of all activity the total rejection of the feeling of agency (performer) and the like determined by the law of life (*Śāstra*) is *Sanyāsa*, asceticism. This alone is meant by the word *tyāga*, renunciation.

The stand of Rāmānuja is in accordance with the message of the Gīta, that is—

“*Ananyoḥ sanyāsasya tyāgasya ca
Ekameva svarupam*”.¹¹

Of the two, *Sanyāsa* and *tyāga*, the nature is the same.

In essence, to use a paradoxical expression, the function of the ascetic in society is to indulge and to refrain at the same time.

No one can be idle even for a second. He will be compelled to act by the forces of *Prakṛti*—the environment. Rāmānuja recognised the true significance of functioning in society conforming to talent and temperament, an inherent accompaniment at the start of life. Society provided a great attraction to him. He was richly rewarded. He utilised every opportunity to strengthen his own

personality. He had definite ideas regarding individuals, their social involvement and behaviour.

As noted above, Rāmānuja believed in the principle of involvement in social affairs. He attached extreme importance to the value of life between the two points of birth and death. To him mental activity and creative ability were not confined to the span of life in the existing birth alone. Applying the doctrine of values, Rāmānuja did not permit himself to be unconcerned about his fellow beings. At the same time, he did not imbibe the habits associated with the different sections of society. He firmly believed in the doctrine of 'division of labour' without which society could not survive.

*"Varṇāśrama vihitaṁ karma
Madārādhana—rūpata yā kāryam
Svayam—prayojanam iti matvā".¹³*

The performances associated with *Varṇa* and *Āśrama*, the castes and their stages, must be done with the knowledge that they are in the nature of worship and therefore carry their own rewards.

He was up against inequality operating among persons. He considered inequality as foreign to human nature. Functional variations do not affect the stature of man who functions as a member of society. The contribution of Rāmānuja in this field is remarkable.

This idea was not originated by Rāmānuja. It was already there in the Bhagavad-gīta.

*"Vāsāmsi jirṇāni yathāvihāya
navānti grhanāti nara
Tathā śarīrāni vihaya jirṇānt aparāṇi
anyāni samyānti navānidehī".¹⁴*

As a person removes the worn out clothes and accepts fresh garments, even so the intelligent person rejects the worn out body and accepts a fresh body.

Rāmānuja explains the above thus—

"Dehagatam tu anityatvam vaiśamyam ca".¹⁵

Impermanance and difference pertain only to the body.

The Gīta taught him that there was something precious and permanent lodged in the body which varies with the passage of

time and disintegrates when deserted. In other words, Rāmānuja believed in the permanency of the conscious entity.

*"Sukha-duḥke same kṛtvā
lābhā-lābhajaya-jayau
tato yuddhāya yuḥyasva
naivam pāpam avāpsyasi".¹⁵*

Treat alike joy and misery, gain and loss, victory and defeat. And then employ yourself in battle. Thus you will not be associated with sin and evil.

Rāmānuja's commentary on the above verse—

*"Nityam ātmānām jñatva yuddhe
ca avarjaṇya-śāstrapātādi-nimitta
sukhaduḥke jaya-parājaya-lābhā-
lābheṣu avikṛte-buddhiḥ
kevala-kārya-buddhyā ārabhasva".¹⁶*

Know that *ātman* (soul) is eternal. In the battle ground, regarding the unavoidable experiences brought about by the use of weapons, such as pleasure and pain, victory and defeat, gain and loss, maintaining the same attitude get engaged only on the basis of duty to be discharged. Treat alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat. Thus equip yourself for strife. You will not acquire the sin of life.

This reflects the sportive temperament of a social member.

The enduring distinguished from the Fleeting

Rāmānuja believed in the permanency of the conscious entity. From the point of view of society this principle had great significance for Rāmānuja. Whether a member of the society is high or low, poor or rich, material or spiritual minded, ascetic or aristocratic, all were subjected to the process of evolution. It was only a question of difference of degree and not of kind. Rāmānuja believed that every one of zest and hope. Life opened up opportunities for every one to realise the hope. It was only a question of time depending upon the level of the individual's fitness toward that goal. But no member of society was to be denied this opportunity towards betterment.

*"Jātaḥ ca ākārataḥ svabhāvataḥ
jñānataḥ atyanta—utkr̥ṣṭa—*

*apakṛṣṭa—rūpeṇa vartamāneṣu
sarveṣu bhūteṣu samāśrayaṇīya
tve samoham*

*Ayam nikṛṣṭah samāśrayaṇe na me
dveṣy osti udve janiyataya na tyājyosti".¹⁷*

I am the same as resort for all beings belonging to superior and inferior varieties in form conditioned by the caste, shape, habit and knowledge. This person, though designated as low in regard to acceptability, is not to be treated as an enemy or to be pushed aside as a source of disgust.

*"Inrāga nālaiyé, aga, ini stridum
nīnraga nīn arul enpalade".¹⁸*

May be today, may be on the morrow, or may be after some delay, your grace is always towards me.

The grace of the Lord may be immediate or delayed, but it is never denied.

The organic view of reality which left a lasting impression on Rāmānuja's mind provided him with cardinal principles of profitable life—*Śarīrātmabhāva*, *apṛthaksiddhi*, *ananyatva* and *samanvaya*—which are derived from the basic concept of structural synthesis. The structural synthesis covers the supreme controlling power which projects society and maintains it under its sway. *Apṛthak-siddhi* is non-existence in isolation. *Ananyatva* is non-self-assertion, *Śarīrātmabhāva*—non-aggression, *Samanvaya*—single purpose. The four concepts mentioned above may be put into groups—The first—the attitude of the individual towards the source, the second—the hold of the source on the individual. *Apṛthak-siddhi*—the individual shall realize that he exists not in isolation unconnected. *Samanvaya* is the sole and supreme aim of life in its march towards perfection. *Śarīrātmabhāva*—the source holds its sway on the individual in its entirety. The soul holds the body entirely functioning without resistance. *Ananyatva*—the source does not permit the individual any aloofness.¹⁹

*"Kāñcana dravya—viśeṣam prati
viśeṣanatayā eva yasya sadbhāvaḥ
tasya tat—apṛthak-siddheh
tat-prakārataya tat—samānādhikar-
ṇyena pratipādanam yuktam".²⁰*

In respect of any substantive entity, if another object could come into being only as its attribute, and owing its existence only as inseparably related, referring to its existence as only the possession of the substantive element, co-existential equation becomes relevant.

Humanistic evaluation of the Social System

Religion and philosophy, poetry and myth are aids to extend the scope of vision. They present to the mind the sublime and enduring modes of life. They are of value to mankind to lead the best kind of life in this world. The world is not a haunted house. Only we must try to drive away the evil intentions which haunt our minds. Humanistic studies which are not historical in the narrow and conventional sense of the term, are still historical because they have a catalytic effect on life and society. They help not to decry life here but to remove the impairing influences in this life. The role of the true ascetic assumes importance in this sense. The emphasis is not on life limited or extended in respect of time. It is on the value of life, whether it be here and now or elsewhere and hereafter, outside the range of historical awareness.

Regarding the role of the ascetic in society, Rāmānuja had some unique ideas. He could be described as a dynamic and active member of society, keen on regulating the course of life. The Aryan concept of asceticism, namely, going to the forest, living a life of isolation and austerity, and shunning all types of social contact, did not appeal to Rāmānuja. The social bias is noticeable in many groups of people who gathered around Rāmānuja in Śrīrangam. A *sanyāsin*, in the traditionally accepted sense, shun's society in self-interest. His aloofness is based on the suspicion that social life would be seductive. The will-power towards self-preservation may not be strong and uniform. Such an outlook, in the opinion of Rāmānuja, was an indication of weakness relying on external factors for protection. Rāmānuja rejected this doctrine of escapism. The ascetic would be a true ascetic only when he lives in the midst of society, working for its refinement. It is remarkable that among the ascetics of yore, only Rāmānuja was surrounded by numberless people irrespective of caste, sex, attainments and occupation, in a co-operative effort to regulate social life as he visualised.²¹ The ascetic, in his view, was part and parcel of society. He had social obligations to

perform. His services were required by society. He owed a debt to society as society also owed a debt to him. The *Vedas* speak of *ṛna* or (debt) in respect of every being that belongs to the world and one such is the *ṛna* that he owes to the society to which he belongs. Unless he discharges that debt, ascetic though he may be, he remains a debt or and his emancipation remains an unrealised ambition. Therefore, to be a true ascetic, is to be engaged in social service from a higher plane. He projects himself as the leading adherent of a way of life which keeps under check the mad fury of personalism which is the very opposite of life as a member of society. Existence is interdependence demanding complimentary and not a contradictory role. A true ascetic, according to Rāmānuja, not only works for his own good, but also guides society on the path of projection and rejection of values and acts as a force of purification without which the savage instinct would continue to dominate. Hence Rāmānuja's social outlook did not make him live apart from society. The aim of an ascetic in society is made clear in the Bhagavad-gīta.

*"Nānavāptam, avāptavyam
varte eva ca karmaṇi"*.²²

There is nothing which is not possessed nor is there anything to possess afresh. Still I keep myself actively engaged.

(This is the clue to the nature of service in life).

Rāmānuja comments on the above verse thus—

*"Svacchandato vartamānasya
kīm-cid api kartavyam asti
yato anavāptam, karmaṇā avāptavyam
na kīm cidapi asti—
atihāpi loka-rakṣāya
karmaṇyeva varte"*.²³

I am already what I like to be. I have therefore nothing to obtain through effort which could not be possessed except through effort. Nothing need be obtained by me which is not already possessed, still I am engaged in active work.

Rāmānuja worked in society and tried to uplift it to the best of his ability.

Philosophy, theology, ritual and ceremonial were not formalities of passing interest in life. To Rāmānuja they were different venues to preserve society in a given order. They were illustrative, but not exhaustive. The order had already been in existence for a long time. Before Rāmānuja over a very long period, the Hindus had accepted that social frame-work and found it viable. Hence Rāmānuja did not want to destroy the social structure, but tried to reform it wherever necessary. He was flexible where it was needed, His attitude during ablutions is noteworthy. Conscience would prevail over custom.⁴⁴ Rāmānuja, the brahmin ascetic, would go to the river for ablutions taking with him his nephew Dāśarathi. While returning after the ablutions, the privilege to accompany him was exercised by a non-brahmin *Bhāgavata* Dhanurdāsa by name.

The dynamic role of an Ascetic

To a modern reformist Rāmānuja might appear inflexible and orthodox, not radical. But from the point of view of contemporary social environment, Rāmānuja was unquestionably a radical. The formal distinction between orthodoxy and radicalism is that 'orthodoxy' maintains a pattern of behaviour at the low level of dogma. His concept of the role of ascetic in society itself is a significant contribution. Living amidst society, the ascetic undergoes all kinds of experience both good and bad. When he is exposed to social environment which is a complex involving contradictions, he strives to endure and be patient with the forces opposed to him. His function is to synthesise, harmonise the contradictory and complex forces of society. Only by endurance the ascetic ascends to greater heights. Once he attains the greater heights, he becomes a model for others who also try to reach the level of the ascetic. In short, an ascetic should act as a force of enlightenment for man as invariably belonging to society. This was the social attitude of Rāmānuja. As far as the ascetic role was concerned, he was alter to the needs of society and he worked for the unthinking masses. He was on the part of progress and evolution. He worked for the upliftment of society.

The ascetics that went before Rāmānuja never disowned responsibility towards society. They believed that their mode of life would be enough to serve as the guiding star for the masses to move in the direction of refinement which would be their aim of life. The world as we see provides us with many instances of rare personal

performances. They result in admiration, periodic enthusiasm and, in course of time, forgetfulness. The result is that man ultimately remains after the observation what he was before the observation. Rāmānuja considered this type not suited to provide an atmosphere in which man could be inspired to be engaged in progressive refinement. To Rāmānuja self-refinement was meaningful only through social refinement. The individual can never afford to be clam and happy in an environment where storm and trouble ceaselessly rage. This attitude compelled Rāmānuja to initiate a system of social life for the benefit of the masses and it forms the topic of the next Chapter.

Service Outlook

The doctrine of service is not the creation of Rāmānuja. The credit goes to his predecessors²⁵ in the field of the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* who became aware of the source of tradition and who discovered the true significance of life in its fulness. Viśvucitta refers to two types of social life—the debasing and the delighting. Under the counsel of the minister śelvanambi, the Pāṇḍyan King Vallabha Dévarāyan held the country in the swing of prosperity.²⁶ Man has only one function throughout and that is *Seva* or service or *Kainkarya* as indicated in the *Jitanta* section of the *R̥gveda* which is relegated to the category of *Khilagrantha* for want of vision and will to follow the truly normal course of life.

Society treated as the fields of Service

Rāmānuja viewed life as a blend of two types of activities in society. The first one is personal purpose and the second is the extension of this concept to society. The body is an organism consisting of several parts under its control. Bodily health is preserved by indulging in clean habits. Cleanliness keeps off contagious pollution. The necessity of personal cleanliness as a precondition in any walk of life is too well-known to be emphasised. In spite of this, the needed attention is not paid and man is subjected to discomfiture, needing outside assistance for recovery. This habit is intended by the word-*Ācāra*-habit.

‘*Lōka-raṣārtham viśiṣṭa-tayā
prathitena śreṣṭhena sva-varṇa
āśramocitam karma sakalam
sarvathā annuṣṭheyam, anyathā
loka-nāśena janitam pāpam
jñānayogād api enam prayāyayet*”²⁷

For the welfare of society even by the elite, renowned for excellence, all acts, in keeping with his caste and grade, have to be performed absolutely. Otherwise the sin arising out of social disorder (*Lōka-nāśa*) will pull down this great man even though he may be very exalted.

The word *Lōka* in this sentence refers to society and the word *nāśa* to destruction of harmony.

In this capacity as a member of society man tries to separate himself mentally from the social environment and continuously works for personal elevation. Personal elevation means resistance to pollution and it is something different from indiscriminate indulgence in material pursuits. Each individual has an urge to realize the aim of liberating himself from frustration and despondency. It is therefore extremely necessary to select a climate which would be favourable to realise the ambition. The atmosphere is considered in two aspects. First is people who had already devoted themselves towards self-refinement and elevation. Secondly, people, unaware of such a course, would be found moving about confining their attention to live comfortably in slums exposed to hazards. In these circumstances, it is necessary to follow the lead of the elders who have provided the healthy atmosphere and to persuade and inspire the common man to adopt a better way of living. In this task they have to provide an atmosphere which would help the masses to lead the healthy life. If the atmosphere is created, naturally chance of helping mankind to see things in their proper perspective would be more. In other words, the duty of the true ascetic would be to advocate conservative liberalism, a system which advocates accommodation and prohibits adjustment. Towards this end Rāmānuja directed his mind after his education. The methods he employed speak for his loftiness of outlook, love for the fellow beings and deep concern over the people's lot whose vision was dim and disappointing. These adjectives are justified by the plunge he took from personal happiness to the pursuit of social happiness. His battle with the master is an indication of his outlook. The scheme that he formulated was not his creation. It existed before. But it was a revival of the ancient system which had been lost sight of over a long period of time. Therefore, Rāmānuja declared himself to be what has been described in the texts as *Vidhishodhaka kṛikarā*²⁸—a servant whose function it is to keep the path cleared of the accumulated garbage of confusion and contamination.

Asceticism as a potent tool of service to Society

When the life of the *ācārya* is studied in the context of life in this world, the word life easily can be understood at different levels in the present life.

The term asceticism implies that one should not lose one self in pursuing petty promises and attractions in life. It is not pessimism for, that word indicates a state of existence with all available comforts completely kept out of use. The attitude of indifference arises as a result of strong desire for a different state of existence which in quality is different and superior. But such a state in which society totally ignored is abstract and uninspiring. Periodically the power of the flesh asserts itself and pulls down the mind from the ascetic level of aloofness. Examples are abundant in support of this danger. Ascetics, seasoned in discipline, sometimes fall prey to outside influence, begin to realise later their folly and try to pursue their ascetic walk of life with greater determination. But they have one failing. They generally curse the entities against whom they could not assert their superiority. The sin of the ascetic therefore is to curse the neighbour for his own weakness. This defect can be overcome only when the ascetic does not run away from his neighbour, but tries to practise asceticism in company. This attitude has a two-fold virtue. It strengthens the mind to resist temptation. It also prevents the mind from throwing the blame on another for one's weakness. The polluting thought of social misbehaviour will be kept under check. An ascetic is the educated specimen of the masses. Hence Rāmānuja thought that the best way of spending life was to stay with the masses and to treat the masses in a way that would not permit of any pollution in association. Hence he scrupulously approved of the habit of the *gṛhastha*²⁰ who would be a *nivṛttarga*—a person who does not succumb to passions and temptations. Most of the disciples of Rāmānuja were *gṛhasthas*. They were ascetics in the sense in which the term has been used in the Bhagavad-gīta. Accordingly, the distinction between the *gṛhastha* (house-holder) and (*sanyāsin*) turned out to be formal.

Rāmānuja did not recommend *sanyāsa* in its formal sense to one and all. Hosts of his followers were *gṛhasthas*—Kūrōsa, Kurukeśvara, Dāśarathī, Amudanār, remained *gṛhasthas*. Parāśara-bhaṭṭa's wife was the selection of Rāmānuja. He permitted only a few to accept *sanyāsa* who were averse to married life. The idea behind the attitude was that compulsion of any kind was to be

eschewed. But going back from the advanced stages was for bidden.

Society a blend of savage and saintly traits

The struggle for existence and ceaseless strife towards emancipation are the normal habits with all men constituting society. People are not agreed on the exact import of existence and emancipation. The content appear differently, pursuits are manifold and the methods followed are also many. But sometimes there is collision leading to conflict of interest with inevitable consequence that, if one of the ways should survive, others must be kept under check. This attitude normally leads a person to interference with the ways of others. This interference is traceable to the ignorance of the fundamental principle that every man is entitled to chalk out his own way of life. Recognition of this fundamental principle instils a spirit of respect and tolerance towards the ways pursued by others, while at the same time the person concerned exercises his right to choose his own way of life. It is the principle of non-interference in other's affairs. The author of the *Tiruvāimoli*, the most sacred section of the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* according to Rāmānuja, has brought out this idea in a lucid way—Men select their leaders according to the taste provided by their intellect.⁸⁰

*"Avar avar tamataṁadu
arīyari vagai vagai
avar avar iraiyavar ena
aḍi aḍivargaḷ
Avar avar iraiyavar kuraivīlar
Irāiyavar avar avar
viḍivaḷi adaiya niṭṭranarē"*

Persons according to the equality of their knowledge worship at the feet of Gods whom they regard as their sole resort. The chosen Gods do not fail the devotees. For the Supreme Lord functions in them and allows them to wield power.

*"Na buddhi-behedam janayet
ajñānām karma-saṁgiṇām"*⁸¹

Among the people engaged in performing acts, one should not create a rift in thought.

The unknowing should not be compelled to receive a foreign thought which would upset the normal way of life. The idea of introducing

fresh thought is to effect refinement and not to efface the habit which is natural to mankind. Work must not be given up. This is the process of purifying the nature of work. Accordingly the people submit themselves to the leaders as they conceive and remain satisfied with the blessings of the chief of their choice. They will not be disappointed. The basic principle on which social life depends includes even the functioning of the leaders. Their domination is undeniably limited.

Unfortunately, this principle of freedom to choose and its corollary of letting persons to exercise their freedom are forgotten in life. The instinct of dictatorship pushes one to the giddy heights of vanity and arrogance. As a result, the vain person demands submission to him under pressure in the form of benefits, or severe persecution and punishment in the refusal. Such a course in the name of religion or spiritual awakening or upliftment of mankind is a crime of infinite magnitude. This was the idea of Rāmānuja. For this attitude of his, he has cited the famous advice of Śrīkṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad-gīta as the solid support.⁸³

"Yathā icchasi tathā kuru".

Do you like, but never under the idea of compulsion of any kind.

Rāmānuja's commentary on the above line is—

*"Eteḍ aśeṣeṇa vlmṛśya
svādhikāranugūṇam yathā
icchasi, tathā kuru".⁸⁴*

Having considered this in full, according to your temperament and position, do act as you like.

Note the alternatives before you for selection, for that, have all of them, you cannot reject any in this world. Hence, regulate. If this attitude is not followed, society can never maintain stability and harmony and its welfare would remain a dream.

There is another way of considering society. It is blend of the human and savage elements. This distinction is based on the function and purpose of factors that constitute life. There is no doubt anywhere about the existence of a power which is supreme and self-propelled holding together all divergent elements. There is another entity which is intelligent in nature, entitled to happiness but affected by the environmental limitations which it cannot shake off

at will. The material element functioning as body establishes relation with nature providing an occasion for men to gather experience. The whole purpose of life in society is under the direct control of the basic power of harmony. The mental entity subserves the purpose of the supreme, utilising the material element as the area of operation. This is the sagacious style. The aim should not be lost sight of if true happiness is the goal of life. On the other hand, another section emerges insisting on the acquisition and exercise of power for self-domination to reap the best benefits from nature. They are the persistent aspects of social evolution. They cannot be denied or discounted.

The *Vedic* culture depicted life in its synthetic form utilising the cardinal principles of *anrthaksiddhi*, *ananyatva* *Śarīrātmabhāva* and *Saṁanyaya*,⁸⁴ which Rāmānuja recognised and adopted. The stream of *Vedic* culture was diverted by resorting to abstract and sectional treatment. The result was the emergence of sectarianism rejecting the right to recognition of aspects of experience which emphasised regulation and restriction in life. There are variations not only in the *Veḍānta*, but in other heretical systems also which emerged including the *Cāravāka*, the materialists which have been rejected in the *Śrī Bhāṣya*.

According to Rāmānuja, education and open-mindedness have the only task of recognising and maintaining the true purposes of existence, namely the individual as a member of society and the obligatory task enjoined on him as a social arm. It does not discard the gifts of the world, but it only accepts the reward as a gift of the occasion.

*"Vāḷṇḍārgal vāḷṇḍē niṇṇar
enbaḍu illai niṇṇuril aḷṇḍār kaḍal
paḷḷi aṇṇal aḍiyavar āmina".*⁸⁵

Get spiritualised and live here in perfect happiness.

Dedication to tame Savagery

Viśnucitta draws a distinction between two types of men in society. He designates the first as *Āḍiyān-Āḍiyār* and the second as *Āḍimat inṇi Tirivār*.⁸⁶ *Āḍiyār*—followers—those who have a stand. *Tirivār*—the straying. The distinction reflects two different temperaments. The true aim of life would be service as a prerogative by constitution. The other way is to think about in the world as 'vagrants' without a thought about the power and the joy that the doctrine of service

holds out. Rāmānuja observed this distinction society. He felt he was bound to adopt the cultured course like all the ascetics who went before him, with the sole motive of personal elevation through the process of progressive purification. This process is elaborately dealt with in what is known as *Varṇadharmā* and *Āśramadharmā*, a mode of personal preservation in a disturbing atmosphere. The restrictions imposed on that in respect of the body he assume at birth and its growth to the point of exist from the world constitute *varṇadharmā*. Naturally this system introduces the idea that seclusion ought to be kept, if personal progress is to be achieved in the absence of congenial atmosphere. An abuse of this attitude is contempt for persons who do not accept this principle. In a sense the system of *Varṇa* and *Āśrama* is taken to emphasise the doctrine of mutual exclusion in society. If this aspect is lost sight of, discipline would be diluted and progress would be halted. This is only subjective. If, on the other hand, in the name of integration, a mix-up is encouraged and adopted, the process would only be an experiment without any fore taste of undisputed improvement—Natural integration is uniformity fulfilling itself through evolution. Whereas the experimental type, employed in the 'try and test' method, would carry with it horror and hazard necessitating further remedial research. Rāmānuja did not deny this. He desired that every member of society should be the embodiment of such discipline.

To effect this transformation, Rāmānuja considered that mixing with society without losing sight of personal discipline would be the best method to bring about a situation in which the charm of democratic pulse would be felt and appreciated.

*"Varṇāśrama vihitaṁ karma
madārādhana-rūpatayā kāryan
svayam—prayojanam iti matvā"*³⁷

The performances associated with *varṇa* and *āśrama*, the castes and their stages must be done with the knowledge that they are in the nature of worship and therefore carry their rewards.

It is in this context that the caste classification and the *āśrama* stages were restricted to the personal aspect of life and the importance of the superiority of the two-fold distinction of society as the dim and the deserving in outlook was realised.

Rough and refined forms of Life

Life as universally admitted is a blend of many forces. One such force is the self-controlled which is the main-stay of life. The body represents the physical force which is attached to a mind which finds itself in an atmosphere consisting of external attractions and promises and the significance of which lasts as long as the material body attaches to the mental entity. Endeavour of all kinds not merely normal and natural but necessary and unavoidable in order to keep the body and the mind together. Common education is a necessary guide to make a proper use of the opportunities in life to derive the best benefits without surrendering to the unpleasant clutches of gloom and adversity. The maximum duration of such a covetable life would be the span of life permitted to man on the earth, he is a hundred years or even more. But there being another element associated with the body, our recognition of it becomes inevitable. Without that life principle human organism loses all meaning and value, though we are apt to forget its importance on the ground that it is invisible and intrinsically different from matter, the stuff out of which the entire world is created to serve as the arena and the instrument for the activity of the mind. If this element is recognised to be as important as the material element, if not more, our attitude to life changes considerably. It should be remembered that the blend being what it is, worldly pursuits are neither ignored nor avoided. Their utility would continue in a different shape providing for a better order of life in society. There is a world of difference between using an object indiscriminately and using the same with a set purpose. Projecting an environment in which the body secures the purpose of life is the course of education and enlightenment.

The caste discipline is a restriction enforced on the individual which is directed towards an awareness about the mode of utilising the wealth of the world. This discipline is born out of experience of misery and hardship. It serves as an inspiration towards further personal discipline. This aspect of life may be considered as service also. But it is personal service.

Men of wisdom, to whatever caste they may belong, who adopt a way of life in which their behaviouristic supremacy is felt and realised, naturally occupy an elevated position in society. Caste discipline is not doubt a means to such refinement in outlook. But mental refinement is not confined and restricted only to a particular

type of caste as it is ordinarily understood. We hear of many great men born in different castes whose outlook on life is unquestionably of an exceedingly high order in which the life value dominates and the interests of the flesh are subordinated, if not subdued. Etymologically they are entitled to be designated as *Bhāgavatas*—truly devoted to realise the purpose of life. The material component of their person does not serve as a bar to their being regarded as leaders worthy of worship. The association with them is from the point of view of their outlook and those great men would never stoop to the debasing level of material comfort and interest to which man is commonly a prey to the detriment of the high ideal they live for. Hence social comingling does not affect the purity of life. It does not even retard progress. In this sense one of the *Dravidian* saints by name Bhaktāṅghireṇu has welcomed worship and mingling.

"Tolūmin nīr koḍumin koṇmin".³⁸

Resort with reverence, offer and receive.

Engage yourself in service. The term service precludes bargaining, give and take.

Thus Rāmānuja has been able to cover the gap between the disciples of devotion and caste.

The potency of prayer and compassion

Clear vision and a determined will constitute a necessary precondition for self-preservation in life. Society is the area in which life functions. In order to attain progress man has to find himself in a surrounding which would help him to pursue his walk of life and reach the coveted goal. But that is rarely to be found. Society follows its own law which may or may not be agreeable to the thinking mind interested in self-elevation. There are many impediments to achieve this goal. The individual finds himself in a helpless situation as a result of these impediments. Such an attitude of helplessness to resist will lead to evolving the maxim that if we are to survive we must adjust to the conditions of the time. The logic behind this maxim is that man is unable to convert, the environment to suit his way of approach and assessment. The healing is temporary and life is carried along the tide of helplessness and finally it reduces the man to the condition of a destitute. Self-preservation means a determined effort to tide over the difficulties

and to establish the supremacy of the will over the environment. The environment has to be converted to suit the purpose of the self and to serve the self in its steady progress. The willpower to control the body and not to fall a prey to opportunism is the mark of character. Therefore, an alert mind has a double purpose. The first is to sympathise over the plight in which society is found and entertain a desire to free society as far as possible from the sad plight. This is an obligation which cannot be lost sight of under any circumstances. The second aspect is a constant concentration, a process of enriching and enlivening the thought to serve as a powerful instrument towards uplifting society. Normally prayer is taken in a religious sense, but primarily it is a ceaseless attempt to develop an idea to a point of potency and perfection so that its instrumental value may not fail.

Rāmānuja followed this path of life. By pursuing this path, he developed such a power to influence society that it could rise to a higher, happier level. Though he was a strict *Vaidika* following scrupulously the discipline enjoined in the *Vedas* and the *dharmaśāstras* in respect of *varṇā* (caste) and *āśrama* requirements of life, he followed the mandate as a personal concern. In addition to this, he revealed another aspect of life in his dealings with society. Remembering full well the dominance of life with a vision, Rāmānuja did not hesitate to respect and recognise the value of intellect pervaded by a warm heart. About the concept of caste domination, Rāmānuja is reported to have advocated the view that caste cannot be the only criterion to assess the cultural worth of a person. His advice to his followers was to adore the worthy and evince sympathy towards the helpless. Failure to observe this conduct is a social crime outside the scope of pardon.⁸⁹

*"Sam seviataḥ samyami-sapta-satyā
pīṭhaiḥ catus-saptatibhiḥ sametaḥ
Anyairantaḥ api viṣṇubhaktaiḥ
Āste adhirangam yatīsarvaḥḥamah".⁹⁰*

Adored by seven hundred ascetics and by the group of seventy-four scholars and other innumerable devotees of Viṣṇu, the supreme sage resides in Śrīraṅga.

In recapitulation, a few instances may be cited. While he was a student keen on searching for a solution to the problems of life, he came across an individual who enjoyed unrestricted prestige, though he was unsuited to be grouped among the chosen classes of men who

could be permitted to study the Vedas. This person was Kāñcīpūrṇa and Rāmānuja approached him for blessings and message.⁴¹ According to him, the caste conception suffers in prestige and function only when it permits the notion of 'Self-Superiority', with the implication of a system of hierarchy not on the plane of discipline, but in the field of demand and prestige. This attitude strikes at the root of the doctrine of service as understood by Rāmānuja and as implied in the *Vedas* and preserved through tradition.

In another situation Rāmānuja projects his frame of mind of 'Self-restraint' and 'Subordination' and devotion to society which appeared to him the lasting base of democratic structure. At Śrīrangam he used to go every day for his ritualistic ablutions in the river Cāuvery. While moving towards the river he went in the company of his nephew Dāśarathī. While returning for the Cāuvery after ablutions Rāmānuja would move in the chosen company of Dhanurdāsa, a person who did not enjoy the privilege of belonging to the brahmin fold⁴². The purity that pertained to Dhanurdāsa in the opinion of Rāmānuja was the temperament of 'Self-subordination' which was strangely still found wanting in Dāśarathī who otherwise was a matchless follower of Rāmānuja. Mingling in society therefore meant neither loss of 'Self-prestige' nor disregard for the intrinsic dignity of the neighbour.

The section pertaining to the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* has as its contributors the human divinities who have come to be regarded as *Ālvāra*.⁴³ The group of *Ālvāra* consists of *Brahmins*, *Kṣatriyas*, *Sūdras* *Pañchamas*—(The unspecified class as distinguished from the four specified classes) including women. This group emphasised the life-power pervading mankind irrespective of caste or custom, sex or habit. Between the passing and the lasting forces the latter power eclipsed passing power of the material instinct to be a helpful factor in the atmosphere of full-fledged life. As is maintained in the School of Rāmānuja, the *Ālvārs* are the visible examples of life, pure and cultured, a type which Śrī Rama in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is reported to have visualised and the lack of which he disapproved during the regime of his father king Dāśaratha. Following in the foot-steps of the *Ālvārs* there was a galaxy of *ācāryas* who could not, however, reach the heights of the *Ālvārs*, but who at the same time did not deviate from the path chosen by the *Ālvārs*. Of them the most noted fore-runners of Rāmānuja were Nāthamuni and his grandson, Yāmuna, Rāmānuja was Yāmuna's pupil's pupil. The life which they led revealed a marvellous and a healthy homogeneity with

the forces of 'Caste and Creed', both the words being understood in a sense which is now obsolete. The *ācāryas* like their predecessors viewed life from the point of view of purpose and function. Accordingly, they developed the view that sanctity of the highest order was inherent in every person and all that was needed in life was to realise that sanctity in a natural way.

It is in this context that significance is attached to the behaviour of Rāmānuja in which from the ordinary *śāstric* point of view, his choice would be considered deviation and departure. As has been already noted, he went out of the way to invite Kāñcīpūrṇa for dinner as 'Atithi'—a guest of honour as laid down in the *Veda-Atithidvayobhava*.⁴⁴ Ignorance of the true implication of this maxim involved the husband and the wife in a dispute which resulted in Rāmānuja moving towards *Sanyāsa*. Social habits in which the self dominates over others are unworthy of approval and application as they tend to agonise persons who deserve a treatment affable and enlightening.

Rāmānuja, being alert, observed human activities at different levels. If the activity suggested to him the link with the Source and the purpose connected with it, he felt elated and regarded the workers as indeed refined and gifted. In support of this we can give an interesting episode in the life of Rāmānuja. During his sojourn to Melukoṭe in Karnāṭaka, Rāmānuja met a batch of people who were tribals having perhaps no ray of cultural outlook. All the same the human instinct inherent in one and all shows itself as a helpful guide to persons in distress. Rāmānuja had a vision of the Lord, the deity being known as Nārāyaṇa. He had a burning desire to go to the spot from where the deity revealed itself to him in his dream. The path was not clear. He did not know in which direction to move. It was a dense forest and movement was physically impossible. The tribals chanced to notice Rāmānuja in a depressing mood. By themselves they cleared the passage and aided Rāmānuja to move towards the spot where, to his ecstasy, he saw the deity which had appeared to him in his dream. Śrī, the Lord's consort, an embodiment of compassion, has it as her function to bring together the joy-bestowing Lord and the joy-seeking self. She does it as part of Her duty and Her only reward is the satisfaction that the seeker has moved beyond suffering. This doctrine of spiritual redemption operated in the mind of Rāmānuja as he saw the tribals help him reach the image of the Lord. Accordingly, in unbounded joy, he designated them as *Tiru-k-Kulattārs*,⁴⁵ the clan traceable to

Śrī, the divine consort and functionally belonging to Her family. *Tiru* in Tamil means *Śrī*, in Sanskrit, a term which the best brahmin would like to claim, but which has been strangely the preserve of the tribals. This episode makes clear that he had no belief in the theory of the low-caste.

From these incidents it becomes clear that Rāmānuja believed in the natural development of any tribe and the realization of the ultimate goal without having to change from one sect to another sect which seems to be the belief based on the doctrine of gradation of birth and *āśrama*. The thought of Rāmānuja finds its support in the utterance of Śrī Krishna in the Bhagavad-gīta—

*Śreyān syadharma viḡuṇaḥ
Paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitaḥ
Svadharme nidhanam Śreyaḥ
Paradharmaḥ bhayāvahaḥ*".⁴⁶

One's normal role in life, though lacking in efficiency, is more profitable than accepting a foreign role well-conducted. Perishing by clinging to one's role in life is better than adopting or borrowing a foreign role abounding in dangers.

The substantive stand in the scheme of life is preferable to the attributive. Rāmānuja's commentary on the above verse reads thus—

*"Paradharma-bhūtaḥ
Pramada garbhatayā bhayāvahaḥ"*.⁴⁷

Being the habit of alien, it is a source of concern because it does not provide the knowledge of function.

Dharma here is the staple force or power. Imitation or encroachment is a veritable impediment to natural progress. They may only provide variety but they will not be a support against peril. How Rāmānuja behaved in his life towards society is based on his determination to adopt a disciplined course which connects the ground and the goal of life impelled by the synthetic instinct in outlook and activity. We are accustomed in normal life to be prompted by the physical instinct. At a higher plane the physical instinct is replaced by the mental instinct which operates as the prompting of conscience. Even that is limited in the absence of the intuitive prompting which covers all three aspects, the constitutional, the mental and the material. The constitutional prompting sanctifies the mental and purifies the material instincts. Any

member of society who exhibits this tendency and adopts it in life is worthy of association and adoration. The inverse way of life would appear to be a move in the direction of decay and disappointment. Rāmānuja appears to have recognised the utility of *Varṇāśramadharmā* (the obligation based on caste and stages in life) in respect of the trend of decay in life as a checkmate. But he does not confine himself to the rigidity of *Varṇāśramadharmā* in respect of social behaviour as applicable to what he terms the elite. In the work, composed in Tamil by his disciple Amudanār⁴⁸ occurs the verse—

*"Marraru pèrum madiyādu
Araṅgan malar aḍikku āl urravare
Tanakku urravarai-k-kollum uttamanai"*

Not considering any other ambition, Persons firmly devoted to serve at the feet of the Lord of Śrīraṅga are taken as His inseparable associates.

In this work, the Gāyatri of the Prapanna, reference to Rāmānuja's association with different persons constituting society is made in verse 57 of the work bearing the title *Rāmānuja Nūrīandādi*. He considered as his personal kinsmen those who had dedicated themselves to the service of the Lord not countencing any other goal in life. This was the super caste—the universal caste, that Rāmānuja believed which he treated as the precious gift of the truly enlightened section of society. In this light the information that we have about Rāmānuja that daily after ablutions in the morning, he would return home from the Cāuvery holding the hands of Dhanurdāsa becomes significant. It points to the sacredness of such behaviour. Adherence to duty carries with it popularity as its natural reward. Rāmānuja firmly believed in the maxim that discipline is divinity and that divinity is the cure for all evils and shortcomings in life. The number of women and non-brahmins (to use an archaic expression) flocking around Rāmānuja was nearly 12,000. They were called Ekāntins—persons who did not waver in their minds, not to mention the *Sanyāsins* and other scholars.⁴⁹

*"Sam—sevtataḥ samyamī—sapta—satyā
pīṭhaiḥ catus—saptatī bhīḥ sametaḥ
Anyairantaiḥ api Viṣṇubhaktaiḥ
Āste ādhitraṅgam yatīśāryabhaumaiḥ"*⁵⁰

Adored by seven hundred ascetics and by the group of

seventy four scholars and other innumerable devotees of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Sage resides in Śrī Raṅga.

In the view of Rāmānuja society is one. It is a unit accommodating a variety of individuals each differing from the other in many ways. Yet that they are all contained in the unit is a basic fact. Therefore, they deserve to be regarded on a par with one another, as parts of the unit. But the variety and difference in projection and behaviour cannot be ignored. If these two aspects are viewed together the only conclusion would be that restriction pertains to the individual content lest it should decay. But the real purpose of being a part of the unit is to allow the other parts to develop through the mould of personal discipline with a single purpose in view. All the individuals are parts of the single unit and they cannot operate forgetting the basic stand and aim. That is the explanation for Rāmānuja being an ascetic in the accepted sense of the term of aloofness and being involved in maintaining and promoting social welfare allowing different categories of persons together around him to serve the purpose of developing to perfection the individual personality. This is the spirit of the mendicant's life in society.

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3. *Ibid* : *Tiruvātmoli*, III—VII—9.
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5. *Mudal Ayltram*, *Amalanādi*—*Pitrān*, verse 1.
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14. Rāmānuja : *Gīta Bhāṣya*, II, verse 30.
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26. *Ibid*, IV—ii.
27. Rāmānuja : *Gīta Bhaṣya*, III, P. 321.
28. Sudarsana : *Śrūtaprakāśika*, Introduction.
29. Note : *Gṛhastha* : The word *Gṛhastha* is understood in its broad sense of the existence of an ascetic in society and not merely a person who is wedded and therefore responsible to his partner in life (*Gṛha* — society).
30. Ālvārs : *Dīvyaprabhandam, Tiruvāṭmōḷi*, Chapter III, verses 1-1-5.
31. *Bhagavad-gīta* : Chapter III, verse 26.
32. *Bhagavad-gīta* : XVIII 63.
33. Rāmānuja : *Gīta Bhaṣya*, P. 558.
34. Rāmānuja : *Śrī Bhaṣya*, P. 203.
35. Ālvārs : *Dīvyaprabhandam, Tiruvāṭmōḷi*, IV, i—6.
36. Ālvārs : *Dīvyaprabhandam, Tirumōḷi*, 4-4-11.
37. Rāmānuja : *Gīta Bhaṣya*, XVIII, verse 9, P. 518.
38. Ālvārs : *Dīvyaprabhandam, Tirumōḷi*, verse 42.
39. Perumāl Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, P. 426.
40. Perumāl Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, PP. 364 to 368.
41. Yāmunācārya, M. : *Rāmānuja's Teachings in his own Words*, PP. 10-11.
Govindacharya Swamin, A. : *Life of Rāmānujacarya*, PP. 58-59.
42. Perumāl Jiyar : *Guruparampara Prabhāvam*, P. 328.
43. Note : Ālvārs are the seers of the *Dravida Vedānta*.
44. Note : *Atithidevobhava*—Regard the Guest as God.
Atithi—A guest of honour.
45. Note : *Tiru-k-Kulattār*—A clan belonging to the family of *Śrī*—The consort of Lord Viṣṇu.
46. *Bhagavad-gīta* : III—35.
47. Rāmānuja : *Gīta Bhaṣya*, III—35.
48. Amudanār : *Rāmānuja Nūṟṇṇādī*, verse 57.
49. Perumāl Jiyar : *Guruparampara Prabhāvam*, PP. 364-367.
50. *Ibid*, P. 368.

CHAPTER IV

Rāmānuja's Interest in Society and its Well-being

Interest in Society and its Well-being—Equality, an Assumption Conditioning Harmony—The Hazard Involved—The Role of the Caste in Society—The Limitations of Caste System—Ritual Transformed into Service—*Śaṭṭadār*—The Way of Reforming Society According to Rāmānuja—Enlightened Approach—Traditional Clue and Support.

An insight into the nature of life in society is essential for a person to discriminate between what is natural and what is adventitious. Otherwise human effort would be a move along a pointless path. Therefore, education and personal equipment in the light of that education would be the pre-condition in any active walk of life. Rāmānuja was not an exception to this rule. What marks him from others is his interest in the fellow beings. This made him work for his fellow beings with his equipment. Therefore, the personal equipment of Rāmānuja, mental and social in the form of discipline, may be regarded as an exercise to fit him to serve society along the lines of *Vedic* tradition which does not exclude any one from securing the best in the world.

Interest in society and its Well-being

The worth of a leader in society is measured in terms of his endeavour to keep society happy and contented. Peace and 'prosperity are the prime considerations for the welfare of society. Each man differs from the other. Aims and ambitions are not always similar or even the same. The fear of being caught in conflict is neither rare nor unexpected. The law that the fittest survives may be unchallenged. But the defect attached to that law is that survival involves struggle in the process. Peace and prosperity appear to be objects of desire. Though they may be realised, the realization may be uncertain or shortlived. Therefore, in society man mingles with man in order to co-operate, to effect a situation where no

person would be subjected to misery and duress. But co-operation is not such an easy thing. The basic instinct in man is self-assertion. That instinct does not permit of self-denial with the same spirit as self-assertion.

"Sarve 'sām eva svātantryam eva
Iṣṭa-tamaṁ drśyate
Pāra-tantryam dhu-kha-karam
Śarīram svātantram prapīyate
tasmīn eva, aham iti saṁsārīṇām prapīṭhi
Ātmābhīmanah yadrśah
tad-anugūṇaiva puruṣārtha-draṣṭīti".¹

Dependence on others is misery, happiness is to exercise control. The body, being the unit of existence, is regarded as independent. Ordinarily men believe that the body is *Ātman*—the self. The aim of life is determined by the way in which the entity *Ātman* is regarded.

Co-operation is seeking the help of another and to promise help in return. The aim is that the co-operating partners move beyond discontentment and keep satisfied. The emphasis in this co-operation is not to be the gain to one's self only. It should be the endeavour to keep the other partner satisfied. This is understood by the Sanskrit term, *Para-samrddhi*, benefit to the neighbour. Therefore attitudes, utterances, arrangements and explanations are indulged in to make a show of equality among all people in respect of status and claim in society. But at heart there is the craving in most cases for being recognised as a senior, a superior and a model for the rest in society. It would be unfair to truth to maintain that man looks upon as his equal in every way under all circumstances. Equality therefore is a doctrine adopted under special conditions in the absence of which anarchy and extinction may result as is recorded in the mythological battle of the *yādava* after the departure of Śrīkṛṣṇa from the world. Human nature being what it is, the instinct of self-importance and elevation cannot be uprooted. Multiplicity of purpose in the world is a fact which cannot be ignored. It is not healthy as a social measure, because it violates the doctrine of *Samanvaya*, as understood by Rāmānuja, one of the four cardinal principles supporting the stand of Rāmānuja.

Equality, an assumption conditioning harmony

Society is a group of individuals each with the instinct for self-

assertion. Therefore, the treatment that may be accorded without inviting disapproval is to provide equal opportunities for one and all, so that the inner talent and instinct of every individual may be allowed to develop unhampered. In other words, it is providing the field suited to the growth so that there is no preferential treatment accorded to any particular individual or section of society. The difference noticeable in this context is a capacity pertaining to the individuals or group that is concerned. If the environment and the application of the capacity are of a healthy order, the result presented is impressive. But any shortcomings here and there must be traced to either the opportunity and the environment or to the instinct and incapacity. Public interest in social service is to provide the opportunity uniformly and to encourage the development of instinct and capacity as best as could be possible. Therefore, social involvement includes two vital aspects—the first is to provide an opportunity and the second is to permit the development of capacity. Both these aspects of social order are based on the strict principle of social discipline. Social discipline can be maintained only in the presence of mutual trust, affection, respect and tolerance.²

Rāmānuja quotes from the Bhagavad-gīta and following is his commentary on that—

*"Yetu ārādhānāya dattān
ātmaratayatā, upādāya
vipacya, aśnanti, te papat-manāḥ".*

Those who receive gifts for worship, for non-personal use, receive in selfish interest, utilise and consume, they are sinners by nature.

Indeed, trust property cannot be treated as personal property. The purport of the above statement is—A social being, if he is selfish; is considered a sinner.

*"Annāt buūta-sabda-nīrdiṣṭāni
Sajjyānt śārīrāni
Parjajñyat annam
Yajñāt parjajñyaḥ
Yajñsca, kartṛt-vyāpāra-rūpāt karmāṇaḥ
Karma ca sajñyat śārīrāt
Sajñyam śārīram punarapi annat
Chakravat parivartamānam".³*

The word *Anna* refers to the material complex, namely, the

body with the mind lodged within. From *parjañya Anna* emerges, from sacrifice *parjanya* emerges, sacrificial worship emerges from the act which is the performance of the agent. The act emerges from the living body. That living body again emerges from *Anna*. This is the revolving nature of life.

Life is a cycle and society is also treated as a cycle in which the participant play the role of give and take without exception.

The hazard involved

Involvement in social service is a very hazardous adventure. More often the reformer comes to trouble and his end is mostly tragic. The only glory that may attach to him is that he becomes a martyr.

*"Tannai etṭinarkku attānam koḍuppadu
tan tagavu enṭum śaran koḍutte".⁴*

To them who approach (Him) Rāmānuja offers relief for he believes that it is his duty to offer relief.

Whoever approaches shall be served to the extent of being treated as his equal. This Rāmānuja considered as his habit in life. Religious seers in India followed a course of personal discipline and development by moving from earthly interest to spiritual inclination, from the shaky to the steady. The process involved a movement through what may be called the *āśramas* or the stages of life. This they did probably because they felt that personal purification and elevation were a pre-condition to cater to the needs of society in its march towards perfection. The *āśramas* were four in number. The first, the *Brahmacārya* as it is called, was confined to acquisition of knowledge with the help of a *guru* and a dedication to cater to the need of the *guru*. This is service to society at the starting stage, to an individual for whom respect is due because that is the source of enlightenment. In addition to this there is another obligation enjoined on the *Brahmacārin* (bachelor) that he shall perform regularly the ritual of *Saṅdhyā* every day. The significance of this *Saṅdhyā* is that it contains in it the germ of service without any expectation. Service, if neglected, would lead to degeneration. It is stated to be a *nityakarma*—a daily duty which cannot be avoided. This is the initial form of engagement in service as such.

In the second stage when man gets married after education he

plunges into society, engages himself in the act of give and take which reminds him of the fact that man is an inseparable part of the social fabric and that he cannot keep aloof in life. The best way to be a happy as possible is to earn and to spend not merely for personal happiness. There are rituals prescribed which are both private and public. The *grihya sūtras* record how man has to conduct his life as a house-holder. He shall not think of himself only, nor can he totally forget himself. According to Rāmānuja, the statement of the Bhagavad-gīta in a different context is clear on this point⁶.

*"Devān bhāvayatānena
Te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ
Paraśparāṇi bhāvayantaḥ
śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha"*.

This way oblige the Gods, they shall also oblige you. Thus mutually obliging, reach the highest prosperity.

Rāmānuja's commentary on the above verse is the following—

*"Anena devatā āradhana-bhūtena
Devān madātmaḥ
āradhayata evam paraśparāṇi bhāvayantaḥ
śreyaḥ avāpsyata"*⁸.

By means of this act, regarded as the worship of Gods in whom I d'well, you offer worship. Thus obliging mutually, reap the best of happiness.

The purport is treat the devas as related to God and get your rewards. Thus with mutual service be all of you happy. In an other verse, preference to the neighbour is emphasised and self interest can appear only in the end⁷.

*"Yjña-śiṣṭā-śmah santo
mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ"*.

The good who consume what remains of the sacrificial food will be free from all kinds of sins and imperfections. He who eats without sharing with others is verily a thief.

*"Taiḥ dattam aprādayaiva
yo bhuṅkte stena eva saḥ"*⁸.

Whoever utilises the gifts of nature without being made available of others is verily a thief.

From these statements it is clear that in society selfishness and

personal consideration are the surcst cause of misery and disaster.

The third stage called *Vānaprastha* deals with a person who is no longer able to offer his service to society in an active way. He therefore retires to a quiet place or a suburb trying as best as possible not be a burden on society. Content with what nature may offer in the *Vana* or forest, he does not permit himself to be a recipient of favours for he realizes that the could not be of help any more. He would not like to be burden.

The last stage called *Sanyāsa* is to shun even the privilege of the *Vānaprastha* and to think of the only principle that sustains all for ever, trying to merge into it when he discards the body which had established his link with society during life time. The two later *āśramas* are significant in the sense that there would be no justification for the persons to hang on to society for their existence or comfort.

The *Sanyāsa* or the final stage also indicated that nothing ephemeral could be permanent and therefore blind attachment to worldly life without developing the spiritual would be life wasted and abused. It may be noted that in the *āśramadharmā* there is no note of pessimism anywhere except a warning that life in the world is not always the same nor is it an eternal experience. Here we notice an indirect way of keeping society informed of the aim and way of living in this world. But this indirect enlightenment is rarely realized because passion and prejudice, the eternal forces of worldly instinct, upset even the most alert and disciplined mind in the world. There is however no note of despair though the struggle is fierce and protracted. Rāmānuja draws this lesson from the experience of Arjuna⁹.

*"Naṣtomohah, smṛtiḥ labdhā
Sthitosmi gata-sandehah kariṣye"*

Confusion is gone, memory is regained. I am steady, I have no doubt, I shall do.

*"Sneha-kārmṇya
pravṛddha-viparīta-jñānamūlāt
Sarvasmāt avasādat vimuktaḥ
gata-sandehah, savsthaḥ
sthitosmi idāṁ eva tava
vacanam kariṣye"*.

I am free now from depression brought about by the wrong impression based on ill-directed affection and sympathy. I

have no more doubts. I am my normal self. I am steady. Without further delay I shall engage myself in duty as you have suggested.

The role of the Saste in Cociety

Socialism, a progressive measure is regarded as a power to put down casteism which operates in society under the instinct of dogma, belief without reference to the rationale in support of it. The functional aspect is forgotten, but the prestige aspect is emphasised. This apartheid between the prestige claim and the obligatory function of the caste is the root cause of social disharmony.

It becomes clear upon full reflection that casteism in a style of life in society which records the refinement of an individual or a group in the journey towards perfection. The aim is selfish because it keeps a section of society out of contact. It involves a split in the process and therefore it is not social by nature or outlook. On the other hand, the other view of treating society as a unit, as an indivisible unit, restricts the scope of the caste-order to retain efficiency to meet the needs of the neglected section. The caste-order is therefore a discipline in equipment to build a society in which the equipment could be fully utilized. In this sense caste obligation is a means and not an end. This point is made clear in the following passage¹⁰.

*"Brāhmaṇyam vilat śellugiradu
Vedādhyānādi mugatīlāḥ
Bhṛgaval-lābha-hetuvēnu
adu tāne ilayukkuur uppagil
tyājyamām ire"*.

Brahminism retains its utility as instrumental to heavenly bliss through *Vedic* studies and practices. If that very brahminism is put to abuse it deserves to be discarded as a degrading stigma.

The *Sūtra* quoted above maintains that *Vedic* education emphasises function and not prestige of the functionary.

Four castes are mentioned in the *Vedas*, they are *Brahmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *śūdra*. The cosmic person or *Puruṣa* as He is called in the *Puruṣa-sūkta* is the source from which the four castes have sprung. From the mouth emerges the *Brahmin*, from the shoulders the *Kṣatriya*, from the thighs the *Vaiśya* and from the feet the *śūdra*. It may be that in course of time the disparity in social status

was accounted for on the basis of emergence from the different parts of the Cosmic Person. But from the fuller point of view it would be not in tune with fact and function to maintain such a gap in value. For, the difference is only functional as represented by the organs all of which are parts of a single unit, the containing personality. Each limb asserts its importance in a particular way and this importance can never be the basis to claim difference in status. Thus probably the evil of caste system came to be felt with the assertion of the superiority of one caste over the other, forgetting the basic truth that society cannot do without any one of the four castes mentioned above. If thus the classification is necessary and if the castes are interdependent, the claim to status is an act of inexcusable vanity.

The caste system is, no doubt, a social convention, but it is not creation by society founded on convention, in opposition to the orthodox traditional view. The *Vedas* came to be regarded as only a communicative phenomenon introduced by the members of the society concerned. The orthodox view is therefore, that the *Vedic* literature, being co-eval with the ultimate Real both in latent and patent forms, the authoritative nature of the *Vedic* cannot be questioned except that it should be recognised that the caste classification is confined to the society in its working condition.

But in the *Vedas*, while laying emphasis on the importance of training the mind to a pitch of awareness and alertness such that it may be able to feel the pulse of the most subtle aspect of experience strangely a restriction has been imposed and persons eligible to follow the *Vedic* course of education are the male members of the three castes to the exclusion of all women and *Śūdras*¹. This topic is discussed by Rāmānuja in his *Srī Beāṣya*. It is known as the *apasūdra adhikaraṇa*. This apparently amounts to a selection which has on justification from the point of view of enlightenment and salvation which has never been denied to any one under the Sun even in the *Vedas*. That would imply that the caste frame is the only ladder to emancipation and there is no other way out for mankind.

This doctrine of restriction leads us to a situation of contamination in society, namely, women and *Śūdras* whose active participation and association have not been denied in society. It may be that the privileged castes had to be dependent on the other two, namely, the *Śūdras* and the women who were embodiments of production and service. Therefore, the women and the *Śūdras* were exempted from undergoing the discipline which was mandatory for the male

members of the *trivarṇikas*. It is of utmost importance to remember in this connection that women have come to be regarded as angels and the treatment of the *Śūdra* should be even superior to the treatment one can offer to one's own wife. Apastamba has made this point very clear referring to the *Śūdra* as *Karmakāra* one engaged in the discharge of duty.

"Kāmam ātmānam
Bhṛyām putram vā
Uparandhyāt-natveva
dāsa-karma-karam".

Rather check myself, may I be or my son, but never a person employed to serve.

This is quoted by Sudarśana while explaining in the Śrī Bhāṣya the term *Eka-dikṣa* of the opening verse.

The *Karmakara* is the servant. On the basis of the caste system the term refers to *Śūdra*. In the event of deserting any person the maxim that should guide the educated is that the *Karmakara* shall not be deserted even if it means giving up one's own kith and kin including the wife and even one's own life. This is an indication of the attitude that a person should entertain towards persons engaged in honest service. This topic is, however, too complicated to be treated in this work. Therefore suffice it to say that the caste system was a reflection of the doctrine of natural distribution of duty among the sections of society to preserve the homogeneity of society.

The doctrine of beginning lessness and the theory of *Karma* are cited in support of maintaining the caste distinctness in society. The concepts of *Anādi* (Beginningless) and *Karma* may be roughly understood as instinct and habit and any effort in society must be to refine the same and not to replace it. With this in mind the *Vedic* literature through the later clarifications and commentaries has provided for enlightenment to the masses in a way which does not involve the strain of discipline to which the first three groups have to subject themselves. Already we notice what is needed for enlightenment and emancipation is knowledge and not the process by which it is obtained. According to the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* theory, every living being, a creature of the Absolute, can be engaged as a matter of inherent right to service or *Kainkarya* as it is termed, this behaviour of the created entity has no bearing of any kind on maintenance, survival, improvement or attainment of the goal, all of which are

believed to be only the responsibility of the Absolute source which is unconditionally the Creator, the Maintainer and the Destroyer. It is indicated in a graphic way of referring to the three strides of the Lord *Trivikrama* who has kept under the shelter of his feet all the creatures. Hence being the protected under the feet the aim is to reach the feet with full knowledge and be engaged in unbridled service with full knowledge and be engaged in unbridled service with full zeal and enthusiasm. The final goal of the three selected castes under *Vedic* discipline is just this. The sage Vyasa is reported to have made a remark that in the *Kaliyuga*, there are only two types of *Sadhus*—*Kālīh Sadhuḥ*, *Strī Sadhuḥ*¹³.

The limitation of Caste System

Caste is a functional mark attached to a material body, in which is housed the precious soul, which is totally distinct from the material frame. Divine in nature, caught in the bodily frame, the soul gets its powers squeezed and crippled. The attempt in life is philosophically to effect an escape from the body and feel the freedom of normal spiritual experience. In the process it gathers experiences, pleasant and otherwise. As long as it continues in the frame, it acts in a way which leads the spirit from one frame to another. The quality may not be necessarily different from the one already possessed. As is said in the *Gīta*, the worn out clothes are thrown out and fresh ones are accepted by men. Rāmānuja elucidates the point thus :

*"Jīrṇāni vāsāṃsi vithāya, navāni
Kalyāṇāni vāsāṃsi grhīhātāmeva
harṣa-nimittameva atra, upalabhyate"*¹⁴.

Leaving behind the worn out clothes, the new whole-some clothes are accepted with all joy. The same principle obtains even regarding the changing bodies.

Man leaves behind the existing body and moves into a fresh one. When the soul comes upon a stage such that it requires no further body, it is expected to have won freedom from the fetters of *Samsāra* birth and death series. At that stage he will employ himself in service. This service is unknowingly indulged in by habit by the women and the *Sūdras*. All that they need to know is the spiritual worth of their instinct.

The *Upaniṣads* have drawn attention to a doctrine that the Principle that creates and governs the cosmos can alone elevate any one

to enlightenment and salvation. In the same context, it is gathered that the mightiest becomes the most worthless and incapacitated except under the control and assistance of the Sustaining Principle. The two expressions may be remembered.

*"Yam eva eṣa vṛṇute
Tena labhyaḥ
Tena vinā īṇam api na calati*¹⁶.

Only he whom the Lord chooses shall reach Him, the dependent cannot claim the privilege of the supporter.

This doctrine is a sure remedy for both arrogance and depression. From this it is clear that man, however heroic, is but a helpless entity entirely dependent upon the favour and selection of the Governing Spirit. This aspect reveals the other face of philosophy that man, instead of winning salvation, receives it if he is fit to be rewarded.

Ritual transformed into Service

The principle implied in the performance of ritual is that the intelligent element of creation, namely the human being, is essentially an active member of society. Secession from activity amounts to denial of the entity according to Rāmānuja. He remarks—

*"Na aktincit kurvataḥ śeṣatvam"*¹⁷.

Śeṣatva or servitude cannot apply to one who is inactive (*Śeṣatva*—meant for the use of others, *Śeṣatva* really is offering for active service).

The Absolute, according to the tradition of the *Vedānta*, upheld by Rāmānuja in his *Viśiṣṭādvaita* (comprehensive Absolutism) philosophy, is the one Supreme Entity with a real world dependent on it. The world is not to be treated as an illusion or a mere appearance. The dependent world consists of two elements, the material and the mental, the *a-cetana* and the *cetana*. The *cetana* shares in a microscopic way knowledge and *Ānanda* and a host of other auspicious qualities pertaining to the Absolute, Brahman. The mind and its body are both established as the body of *Īśvara* subserving its purpose with no claim to independence from it in any aspect. That way the *jīva* is a mental entity eternally dependent upon the Absolute and inseparably linked to it. The direct relationship between the material and mental entities is not eternal, though when it started is beyond knowledge, giving rise to doctrine of *Anādi*.

Being an occasioned relationship it can also be terminated making the concept of *Mokṣa* or liberation meaningful.

The *Varṇadharma* or the caste discipline mentioned above refers to the phase of the link between matter and mind and the process of disconnection. But the relation between the Absolute and the mind is eternal, inseparable. It is commonly overlooked and forgotten in the context of body-mind relationship. The stress laid in the *Drāviḍa Vedānta*, also traced to the *Veda*, is this eternal relationship to be known, to be remembered and to be acted upon. If a person moves on the basis of this eternal relationship, he need not be subjected to the rigour of discipline under caste system. But what has to be kept in mind is that this relationship shall not be abused to promote material interests which are not sanctioned by the caste distinction. People of this inclination and temperament are always regarded as men divine and therefore deserving of treatment due to the deity itself. This is the doctrine of *Bhāgavata Pārāmya*, the supremacy of the true devotee. Caste and other social distinctions apart, a person has a right to regard himself firmly as property of the Lord, the source of life, *Bhagavan*. His behaviour and activity take a shape along this line of conviction. This conviction is universal and not the monopoly of any section of creation. He is called *Bhāgavata* (devotee) and he is superior because of this outlook on life. In the eyes of people who entertain a variety of standards recognising personal superiority, of the *Bhāgavata*, caste restrictions and considerations are blunted in this context and they will not be a bar to any worshipful association with the divine.

This notion of transmaterial temperament and super-self consideration is considered the basic feature of every living entity. To kindle the spirit and keep it bright and steady is the aim of pure life. There will be nothing outside deserving banishment or disfavour as all things are regarded as emerging from the same source and moving in the right direction.

In this context, the Indian seers and *ācāryas* have introduced two classes—the one that move along the right path and the other that needs to be led along the right path. In the one case resistance is criminal and in the other case the lack of sympathy is crime. It is this that prompted Rāmānuja to utilise his life to the service of the Lord by serving society following the virtuous and helping the less fortunate.

According to the *Vedas* as frequently stated, four castes have been recognised on the basis of function. From the study of the

Drāviḍavedānta Rāmānuja has recognised two classes in society based on the cardinal principles which he has closely followed. Accordingly the class of people who cling to the four cardinal principles are regarded as *Toṇḍar*, *Santah*, persons who feel the pulse of the 'Supreme' beating in their heart. They are the wise on the road to all-round prosperity in life. They do not relish the thought of existence, aim and activity except as for the supreme principle which is the ground, the guide and the goal. The other class of people who lack this wisdom and outlook are considered *Aṇḍar* or men with material interest. This class regards itself as privileged to experience happiness as distinct from the Source from which it derives its existence. Sympathy towards this class is therefore a necessity and it is the normal feature of the group of the wise. This sympathy is a helpful factor in the process of elevation to equality which is an attempt to discourage the thought of inequality among members of society.

Rāmānuja's followers could be counted among all castes and sub-castes, sex and skin being no bar as it is said by his disciple¹⁷.

*"Arangan malar aḍikkū
al urṇavarē tanakku
urṇavarāi-k-kollum uttamanal"*

Persons dedicated to the service of the 'Source-Principle' the Lord excluding other aims are regarded as his inseparable kinsmen. Therefore Rāmānuja has emerged as the noblest.

Though a *Sanyāsin* and isolated from the society physically, Rāmānuja enjoyed the company of numberless kinsmen. The criterion for kinship was dedication to the feet of the Lord of Śrīraṅga. His disciple Kūrēśa has given the names of his ancestors following the principle that Rāmānuja laid down¹⁸.

*"Rāmānujāṅghri śaranosmi
Kulapradīyastu āsīt sa yāmuna muneḥ
Sa ca natha—vamsīyah
Vamsīyah parāṅkuṣa muneḥ sa ca,
Sopi devya dāśaḥ tava"*.

I regard as my rescuing agent the feet of Rāmānuja. He was the bright successor of Yamunamuni. Yāmuna was the descendent of Nathamuni, he belonged to the family of Paraṅkuṣa and he is the devout servant of your consort. On this basis I wish to be the target of your grace.

This lineage does not admit *Varṇa* (caste) or *gōtra* (clan). Nor does it yield to the demand of the flesh bed and bread.

Śattadārs

There were countless numbers of *Sanyāsins*, *ghasthas* and ladies among brahmins and ever so many others under the general name *Śattadārs*. The expression *Śattu* means to use or 'to wear'. The word *Śattadār* non-users, was exclusively used in the south perhaps to refer to the devotees who were not the privileged under the *Vedic* decree on the ground that they were not entitled to wear the sacred thread. But having accepted that *Śrīvaiṣṇava* view and way of life they were termed *Sattada Śrīvaiṣṇava* devotees who would not indulge in the restricted functions exclusively mentioned for the *traivarnikas* in the *Vedas*. In other words, upliftment based on caste consideration was denied to them. But upliftment on the spiritual consideration was extended. The procedure of upliftment on spiritual consideration is a necessity even for the *traivarnikas* who on that account. Consider the caste discipline as a mere furrow in the onward march, without attaching to it any value which may imply scant respect and disregard to the fellow creatures of other category, says and *ācārya*, a contemporary of Rāmānuja and his favourite philosophic heir, Kurukeśa in respect of *Bhakti* or attitude towards God and his creatures.

"*Madirā-bindu miśramāna*
Satakumbhamaya-kumbha-gata
Tirtha salilam pōḷa"¹⁹.

Self-consciousness amounting to vanity on the part of a true devotee is like the drop of alcohol in the precious sanctifying water contained in the golden cup.

There is another sense in which the word *Sattadār* is used. The wearing of the sacred thread, learning the *Vedas* at the feet of the master and performing the rituals prescribed in the *Vedas* as not applicable to a group. Therefore they were looked upon as *Veda-m-Śattadārs*—not directly in touch with the Veda restricted to the *traivarnikas*. The system of Rāmānuja recognises as indispensable what is known as *Ubhaya-Vedānta*, which alone is the distinguishing feature of *Śrīvaiṣṇava* tradition, and could lead people along the way of life which he lived and advocated. He introduced the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* to the *Śattadārs* and others so that the formal would in addition to their duty towards the presiding deity in the

selected temples spread the message of Rāmānuja and enlist persons through the ritual of *Pañca-Saṁskāra* to learn and line in a way becoming of a Vedic follower. The said *Ācāryapurushas* (cultural custodians) would first introduce the disciples to the fundamentals of philosophy and engage them in services according to their fitness and temperament. The temples thus become the centre of education worship and service and the social problems pertaining to such people were attended to in what came to be called later on Rāmānuja Kūṭa (Association).

*"Nalvediyargal Toḷum tiruppādān
Irāmānuśanai-t-toḷum periyōr
Elundiraittadum idam
aḍiyenukku iruppidamē"*²⁰.

Vedic experts of exalted stature kneel before Rāmānuja. Greatmen who serve Rāmānuja get together in joy. Such a place I would choose to stay in.

The spirit throughout was one of living high and dignified with affection and service to the neighbour without an eye on personal pomp or pleasure. It would be a picture of individual poverty but collective plenty. Material pulls which would create selective interests leading to conflict and confusion would find no place in the scheme of Rāmānuja. This outlook of Rāmānuja is indirectly suggested in a verse by one Madhurakavi, the direct disciple of Śaṭhakopa²¹.

*"Inru toṭṭum eḷumaiyum
embīān nlnru tan puḡaḷ vīra aruḷinan
Kunra-māda-t-tīru-k-kurugūr nāmbi
Enṟum ennai iḡalvīlan kāṇminē"*.

From the time I allowed myself to be in his presence, my benefactor Śrī Śaṭhakopan stood by me and enabled me gracefully to speak appreciably of the glory which was his fortunate benefit. This leader of mine wouldn't ever let me down, this I would like to announce to the public.

According to tradition, by birth Śaṭhakopa does not belong to the *traivarṇika* or the qualified group of instructors according to Veda. But Madhurakavi was an accomplished brāhmin recognised as one of the leading seers.

The earlier part of the *Vedānta* is the Sanskrit section leading to

the *Rahasya* through the *Upaniṣads* stressing the need to terminate the material link. The other part or the final part is known as the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* which lays stress on the need to remember the permanent link between the supreme and the self which must be cultivated and preserved. Its importance is that it is the fundamental basis of structure to be realised and retained and the body becomes the handmaid to realise this aim though it cannot be retained for all times and though in the absence of God—knowledge, the body may drag men along the polluted current of life. The body thus acquires two distinctive functions—it may be a *Kainkarya* (service) *Śarīra* or it may be a *Sādhana Śarīra*. The Sanskrit Veda emphasises the *Sadhana* aspect while the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* points to its *Kainkarya* aspect. The *Sadhana* is only the starting point in the hands of one who feels independent and entertains personal ambition. The same becomes *Kainkarya Śarīra*.

The *Ubhaya Vedāntin* is termed as *Śrīmad Vedamārga prathīṣṭha-panācārya*. That is a leader protecting the path of *Śrīmad Veda* that keeps in mind the thought of the eternal relationship. The expression *Śattu* in this connection means to complete or cover. He who studies both the *Vedāntas* is regarded as a true *Śrīvaiṣṇava* or *Śattma Śrīvaiṣṇava*. But persons who are experts in the *Varṇāśrama* scheme of salvation to the neglect of the doctrine of eternal bond between the self and the Supreme are regarded as *Śattadārs*.

Thus, in the view Rāmānuja, a true *Śrīvaiṣṇava* is one who follows whole-heartedly the way of life chalked out by tradition as embedded in the *Veda* and elucidated by the *Drāviḍaveda* and elaborated in the sanskrit *vedānta*. In this is included performance which is indulged in by persons whose aims are varied according to their constitutional temperament under the pressure of material association. The ambition of Rāmānuja is to rouse in man the inner divine instinct to action and to clear the hurdle in the wake of its progress in life²². Hence he recognised the right of every one as a *Śrīvaiṣṇava* to enter into spiritual service and be entitled to the esteem and devotion of mankind irrespective of his clan restrictions. But it was necessary that people should tread this path from the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* point of view. He therefore thought of a society of persons of varied castes and customs moving along the path prescribed in the *Vedānta* without any coercion or temptation but out of free will and choice²³. If the eternal values are kept in mind and followed with all earnestness, man is mechanically elevate to the level of divinity, though otherwise he would be unfit to be

admired as a person capable of contributing some genuine good to society.

The way of reforming society according to Rāmānuja

Life is precious and social reformation is based on the consideration that that human life is entitled to uniform recognition and treatment²⁴.

"Ādirān aḍiārku enni aḷ padutta vimalan".

God the benefactor has placed me at the service of his dependent.

*"Urradum maḍiārkkku aḍimai"*²⁵

I have been ordained to be in the service of your dependent.

Barriers introduced by the concepts of race, religion colour, sex, custom, passions and prejudice have no right to be recognised, for there is a common ambition in one and all that pursuit of life is happiness. Contentment enters as a powerful aid so that the forces of discrimination and unequal treatment may not evoke a spirit of dissatisfaction, rebellion or strife leading to despair and misery. Each person in society does certainly possess his individual likes and dislikes. But they shall not be for consideration in a society which believes in justice for all without discrimination. The greater the leader, the more effective is the emphasis on this type of social existence. Even the Upaniṣads have come out with a declaration—

*"Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma"*²⁶.

Everything indeed in this world is Brahman, (the very highest though in a potential form).

Therefore socialism or uniformity of outlook and attitude appears to be both the basic structure and aim of social organisation.

Enlightened Approach

It would be taken as a mark of culture of the highest order if one could elevate one-self to treating every one in a spirit of perfect equality. In this context scholars expect to know the contribution of Rāmānuja. It is said and admitted that Rāmānuja, of all the great saints and seers pursuing the Indian tradition, paid much attention to the social aspect and evinced keen interest in the welfare and upliftment of people belonging to different castes and communities, men and women, depressed and helpless. The expectation is all the keener in the light of what is known as elevating the so-called

untouchables in Karnāṭaka to the status of *Thi-u-k-Kulattārs*—descendants of Lakshmi, the Lord's consort, for some service that they rendered. It may also be noted in this connection that this broad outlook of his resulted perhaps from his association with Śrī Kāñcīpūrṇa and Dhanurdāsa and others during his life time and the culture that he imbibed through his *Paramaguru* Yāmunācārya from the sacred utterances of the *Drāviḍaveda*.

Traditional Clue and Support

It will not be out of place to take up this topic for consideration in the light of Indian culture handed down through the sanskrit *Vedānta* known as the *Upaniṣads* and the Tamil section of the *Vedānta* known as the *Drāviḍavedānta*.

As far as society is concerned, the individual constituting an intellectual part has a two-fold aim. To keep himself fit and happy in the world which surrounds him, the individual has to be active with a purpose. He cannot however neglect his contribution to society which surrounds him. Of the two aims the selfish aim is covered by the altruistic aim. In the one case he has to deserve fair treatment in society, to deserve he has to function. The quality of function may produce the wanted result or prove abortive. On the other hand, the aim to serve society has a great promise. It springs from the feeling that being part of society the individual would not be let to perish under any circumstances. The social law is an operation to keep under protection the members of society. That operation is through social service. If man proceeds with this conviction, he will naturally incline towards the sense of obligation in preference to the sense of demand. It is an extension of the doctrine of *aparthak-siddhi* in social behaviour. This idea is gathered by Rāmānuja and communicated to the masses using philosophic terms. That is as follows.

Two courses are prescribed in the *Vedānta* to know the truth about the world. The one is the archaeological method or the upstream drive of the mind. The other is the evolutionary method or the gliding method. The *Taittiriya* refers to the former and the *Chandogya* adopts the other course. The strain in the *Taittiriya* is a rigorous march from the known to the other, from the effect to the source. The *Chandogya Upaniṣhad*, on the other hand, is an explanation of the activity of the Supreme Real in evolving itself to the finite tiny entity in creation. Here all that is needed is a faithful observation closely following the course of the process without any

need for discipline suggested in the empirical attempt. It is thus possible to admit every one having the ability to observe and follow the course. The discipline required here is impartial observation ending in conviction.

In both these cases there is a special section beyond the normal powers of the person who is in quest after the Real. The *guru* who has some how come to know the source gives the clue to the investigating seeker and directs him to realise it through his efforts. If the experience that he discovers conforms to the model given to him by the *guru*, then his effort is a success. In the *Chandogya*, the observer is finally told that he is 'Brabman' in the sense that he is not identical with 'Brahman', but he is in essence and function at the mercy of the Real.

The doctrine of mercy and the doctrine of absolute subsistence of the *Jīva* (soul) on God lead to a conclusion revealed in the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* and entertained in the sanskrit *Vedānta* that the ground of experience is the sole guardian leaving no scope for the *Jīva* to think in terms of self-protection. Secondly, the function of *Jīva* is exclusively regarded as service under the Lord without any thought of self. These are the two basic ideas which cannot be kept alive or functioning by any effort of the *Jīva*. He cannot be active for he is powerless ; he cannot be inactive for he has to be in service.

This idea is preserved and spread among the masses by the *ācārya* when he applies to them the twin terms *Pāṅgu* (Lame) and *Dāsa* (Servant). This is native to every *Jīva* according to Rāmānuja's study of the *Vedānta* and if this spirit is allowed an opportunity to develop to its full stature freedom is realised. This power is common to every one irrespective of any discriminating physical consideration. Rāmānuja's burning desire was to draw people to their latent glory and to encourage them to develop the same, whatever the frames they might have inherited on the basis of *Karma*. Therefore, abstracted from this idea the body is deemed *Sādhana Śarīra*, an instrument to achieve as recommended in the *Varṇadharma* scheme. But the same body is given a more congenial and dignified function of being a tool of service and from that point of view the respect due to the body engaged in the function is equal to that due to divinity itself. But the problem of social association and intermingling as conceived in the secular world to maintain a homogeneous society is an idea alien to the spirit of service which is the kernel of the *Vedānta* philosophy. Life in a particular body is not an end in itself, nor the body can be permitted to defeat the purpose for which

it has been intended. As far as worldly life is concerned, the law of discipline cannot be ignored, for it introduces discipline of a different order. The two disciplines should not be confused says Śaṭhakopa in his Tiruvāimoli.

From the point of view of Rāmānuja, the body is primarily *Katīkarya Śarīra*—a frame for service. But it is a *Sādhana Śarīra* when it does not indulge in *Kīṅkarya*. This distinction can be expressed in an other way. Rāmānuja stands for the doctrine of dignity of discipline *Kainkaryaniṣṭhā* and not the discipline of dignity—*Yoganiṣṭhā*. This distinction is clearly marked in the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* works—*Āḍiyār* verses *Tirivār*, *Toṇḍar* verses *Anḍar Vālve*, *Vāl* versus *Kūl*, *Mumukṣu*—*Bubhukṣu*.²⁷

“*Āḍiyārkkū āl paduttāi*

Toṇḍar aḍippodī”

Employ me to serve your devotees.

“*Yogaḥ siddhiḥ asiddhyḥ*

Samatva-rūpam citta-samādhānam”.²⁸

Yoga is the mental equanimity in the face of success and failure in life.

It is significant in this connection to note the attitude of Śrī Rāma in the Rāmāyana. Commenting on the benefit to mankind of his father's rule, Rāma deplored the lack of opportunity to discover and develop the innate element of spirit in the scheme of governing the country. Following the spirit of the *Vedānta* Rāmānuja inherited and extended that tradition and tried his best to provide that opportunity and to bestow the benefits on people. However, being an enemy of coercion or compulsion, he never forced any one to follow the path that he had chalked out for himself as well his followers.

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4. Amudanār : *Rāmānuja Nūrandādi*, verse 66.
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CHAPTER V

Rāmānuja and the Economic Field

The Common Coal—The Existing Environment—United Effort—The Basic Start of Co-operative Effort—Discipline as a Democratic Principle of Life—Spheres of Operation—The Triple Nature of Existence—Agriculture—Propriety of Preservation and Distribution—The Economic Castism—Discipline—Personal and Environmental—Production and Distribution—The Twin Aspect of Economic Functioning—Human Organism and Economic Principle—Life's Journey Towards Unhindered Progress—The Need to Meet the Legitimate Demand—The Source Power of Life and Society—Contribution to Preserve Economic Equilibrium—Humility—An Ethical Instrument of Economic Stability—The Style of Economic Functioning—Agriculture Labour—Village Life—Division of Labour—Industrial Production—Pooling of Resources (Permanent, Periodic—General and Specific)—Donations and Contributions in *Karnāṭaka*—The Mite of the *Ācāryapurushas* after Rāmānuja.

Man is a social animal. He is inevitably an inseparable part of society. Joy and misery may befall man. To avoid one and to seek the other exclusively is impossible as long as man is a member of society. But the craving for unalloyed happiness is ever on the increase. The solution suggested in the *Upaṇṣads* is an attempt to cut off social contact of any form. That is termed *Mukti* (liberation). It is an anti-social measure for self-fulfilment. The dominating tendency in life is pessimism. Formerly much thought has not been directed towards assessing the true function and purpose of social life.

It is in this connection the need for the *Drāviḍa-Vedānta* is felt. The structure of society appears completely transformed. Society is no longer a market for bargaining for personal gains. It is an environment where the bliss sought after can be experienced, though for a short time. Society appears to be a prison-house to a person who is not aware of this sober, optimistic perspective. It is lack of knowledge of the right type that drives persons towards gloom

and thought of escape. The *Drāviḍa-Vedānta*—the quintessence of the *Upaniṣadic* thought—emphasises the need to cure the observing mind of its defects. That brings about an attitude of love for society and dislike of personal importance in society. Rāmānuja included in his thought and system this aspect of experience also. His conception of socialism is, therefore, traceable to the *Drāviḍa-Vedānta* which is the essence of *Vedāntic* teaching.

In the *Drāviḍa-Vedānta* (*Vedic* thought enshrined in the Tamil language) Rāmānuja has consequently been accorded a status very next to Śaṭhakopa. He is regarded as the foster-mother of the work *Tiruvāimoli* which was first delivered by Śaṭhakopa.

“*Inṇa mudal tai Sadagopan Moymbal*
Vaṭarta ida-t-toi Irāmānuṣan”¹.

Sadagopan (Nammaḷvār) is the first mother who delivered the *Tiruvāimoli*, Rāmānuja is the foster mother who nourished the *Vedānta* with care and affection.

The *Rāmānuja Nuṭṭandādi* is the biographic sketch from this stand and outlook. Hence the directions in the field of socio-economic activities are traced to the statements Ālvārs.

The Common Goal

According to Rāmānuja, the aim of every individual who forms part or society is to experience a state in life in which peace and comfort are always present. Such a condition is the result of a struggle against disorder and uncertainty. If all people who form society are happy and contented, that would be a heavenly world. People would be moving about revelling in joy. The close association with one another would be a reflection of the feelings of happiness without any indication involving the doctrine of give and take, usually employed to keep persons above want². This idea is made clear in the following verse—

“*Ūrum nādam ulagamum*
Tammai-P-Pōl, ayanudaiya
Perum tārgaḷume pidatta-k-kappavān”.

To teach the inhabitants of the village, the town, and the country, to speak of the Lord's name and the garlands, like himself.

The Existing Environment

Actually conditions in the world are different. The sense of want

is felt accurately by every individual. The only thing common to all is this sense of want and the desire to be above want. The individuals in society are not independent of one another. Interdependence is the basis of social existence. Society is, therefore, considered as an indivisible group of individuals linked to one another of necessity³.

"Tondit' ellirum vāri"

Come in, all of you, dedicated to serve.

This thought, being crucial, is taken up for consideration to keep society in harmony.

United Effort

The joint venture of persons is, therefore, the only remedy to keep want under control, if it cannot be completely conquered. Therefore persons constituting society co-operate, keeping themselves engaged in different functions with an understanding that, if internal conflict is avoided, the combined effort would produce the desired effect. All people are not of the same calibre. Some of them specialise in the field of production where others may find themselves actually incompetent to the required extent. It does not, however, mean that there is a section in society without any ability to contribute to the welfare of society. The fields of contribution are varied. Capacities also are not of the same degree⁴.

*"Kuṭṅgalāi aḍiyirudan
Kūdi ninṇu aḍumine"*.

Please join us, the participants in service, remain with us and be merry.

The basic start of Co-operative Effect

In consequence, there is an adjustment in society with this minimum requirement on the part of every one. The contribution, whatever that be, must be on the basis of honesty and sincerity. Likewise the demand also must be controlled by the desire that personal gain should not be at the cost of others. If this basic principle of 'live and let live' operates, it becomes hard for any one to indulge in activities disturbing the social order. For the principle is that the individual has right to freedom only as a member belonging to society. As such he could neither ignore society nor treat it as a means for his personal benefit. Therefore, the full freedom

that man aspires to in society as an individual is limited. In this context the doctrine we rely upon is that discipline is the ground of freedom⁵.

*“Tonda-k-kulattil uḷḷir vaṇḍu adi toḷuḍu
.....Paṇḍai-k-kulattat tavirṇḍu pallāṇḍu enṇime”.*

You really belong to the class of servants. Rise above the obsolete convention pertaining to the greedy class and pray only for prosperity of the supreme unit.

Discipline as a Democratic Principle of Life

Rāmānuja realised the importance of this discipline and devoted his life-time towards helping society to realize freedom from want through discipline. Discipline has no barriers. It is not confined to any one section of society or any walk of life. On that point of view all approaches made by the participants in society bear the stamp of sacredness. Consequently the thought of qualitative difference in various walks of life would appear bereft of sense and propriety. Without exception the constituent groups and individuals involved in the social structure do not keep themselves idle, but act conforming to their capacity with all earnestness. The result is the production of wealth which serves the purpose of all. In this system there is no scope for any one to boast of contribution. Nor is there a chance for any one to appear depressed that he does not deserve the wealth which he might use. Activity directly or indirectly conducive to the welfare and maintenance of society is natural to every individual which he cannot shake off. This principles of contribution preserves the human mind at the democratic level, ethically and spiritually without which social order could not be unruffled⁶. The wise have maintained thus—

“Kūḷ āl paṭṭu—ninriṅgaḷai puṅḍal oṭṭam”

If you have any selfish motive, we will not admit you to our group.

Spheres of Operation

The fields of activity are many. Activity accordingly appears in different forms. But the fields, considered basic and unavoidable, are taken up for demonstration, to prove that methods can be devised and employed to meet the needs of society and to present a situation in which no man would be the victim of disappointment and despair⁷.

*"Kaḍai Suḷṇḍa maṇṇuḷgam vāḷga
Sāni loka-hitaiṣiṇi".*

May the earth engirdled by the ocean prosper.

The mandatory direction of Rāmānuja is in the interest of the entire world.

The Triple Nature of Existence

There are three constituents or layers of existence. The physical, the mental and the spiritual. The physical and the material wants cannot be ignored. The craving is universal. Life takes its start on the physical plane. To neglect the physical interest is sacrilegious as it is eventually suicidal⁸.

*"Sakala—sāstraṅgaḷāḷum dāhattāle pēru
engiradu".*

All branches of study regard the body as an indispensable tool towards progress.

The very first attention goes towards the problems of foods drink, shelter and association, the minimum needed for physical survival.

Agriculture

Physical survival is the primary pursuit of life. It is universal. The law of nature does not withhold in some form or other adequate food supply for the hungry section of creation. Therefore raising food of quality in sufficient quantity is the basic concern of every living being and naturally agriculture takes a position of importance and priority in life. It is maintained as an axiom that *Sarira* or body is an apparatus without which there could be no existence, endeavour or happiness. This being so, raising food in various forms from the earth has been a natural and universal habit in life. There is no need for any direction or advice to raise food. The demand and supply position in nature is always equal, neither less nor more. The earth has been described as *Sthira* and *Vasundhara* a steady source and the mine of wealth in its common conception as food. This is the value of the earth for man. Inequality is the result of human behaviour and interference in distribution based on the unpardonable desire of allowing to the lured to revel in luxury. As a consequence others would be compelled to have something less than needful. This inequality produces discontent, jealousy and finally moves into a force of conflict and confusion, which it would be extremely difficult to keep under check. Social reforms are

ceaseless attempts to set right this basic inequality. In the process the ideal, though it may be acceptable to all, is seldom realized because the methods employed create further complications. Social history is therefore apparently a steady move from solving one problem after another. But in reality it proves itself to be bringing into existence one complication after another more into prominence. This attitude needs a radical change. Human wisdom collectively or individually can at best offer a short-time solution for a section, but not for all and never for all times. If the wisdom of *Vedic* culture is allowed to have its course, toleration and co-operation, associated with activity and self-restraint would keep the heterogeneous elements together⁹. It is endorsed by Rāmānuja while citing the verse of the Bhagavat-gīta—

“*Yat cāpi
Sarva bhūtānām
Bijam, tadaham avyayam
Natadasti vinā yat syāt
Mayā, bhūtam caracāram*”.

Whatever is the source of all beings pertaining to nature and society, that I am permanently. There cannot be any existence static or dynamic which could dispense with me.

Diversity is a pleasant phenomenon only under the grip of unity.

Propriety of Preservation and Distribution

The doctrine is traced to the Bhagavat-gīta. Rāmānuja explains thus—the doctrine of adequate preservation and of proper distribution is the guiding principle arising out of the agricultural operation¹⁰.

“*Bhūta-jātam mayā vinā,
Yat syāt natad asu*”.

Whatever entity is observed that never is without me.

To protect this doctrine against its abuse, authority must be vested in a person who shoulders the responsibility with devotion. This is not a novel idea, considered by Rāmānuja as a flash. Nor did he think of the ordinary performances which the regimes prior to him might have adopted. He, however, refers to a type of regime which used the full the lofty principle that the sense of unity should not be ignored under any circumstances. It is a logical corollary to

the raising of food to feed the needy. According to Rāmānuja who takes clue from Selvanambi, this is a system which can effectively meet the challenge of economic crisis. This scheme is to avoid pilfering in production and distribution. This thought is taken up for consideration to keep society in harmony.

Economic Castelism

From this point of view society is arranged into two groups. Borrowing the idea from the *Vedas* the two groups are respectively known as the *Dāva* (who co-operates) and the *Asura* who interferes). In the Drāvidian language the terms employed are *Aḍiyār* and *Tiriyar*—the responsible and the vagrant. Through the power be vested with the king whose direction is mandatory, the directing power should carry with it the content of genuine welfare of the society. This content which makes authority ever endearing to the people is mainly the contribution of expert advisers who enter the field on being requisitioned to join the team of experts to preserve and promote social wealth and health. Rāmānuja derived the inspiration noted above from the Rāmānuja the great epic¹¹.

*“Nanduntī udite āditye
Nanādanti astam ite ravan
Ātmano navabyudhiyante
Mamūṣyaḥ jīvita-kṣayan”*.

With the sun-rise men feel cheerful, with sun-set men do feel cheerful. But men are not aware that life is limited.

The purport, in the opinion of Śrī Rāma, is that people are satisfied with the day-to-day achievements unaware of the lasting welfare.

Rāmānuja looked back to a period in which he found such a healthy system in operation in the region of Pāṇḍya. The great person who shouldered this responsibility was one Selvanambi, whose services have been extolled by his contemporary Viṣṇucitta.

*“Alvaḷakhu onrum illā
aṇi kōṭṭiyar-kōn abhimāna-tuṅgan
Selvanai-p-pōla Tirumale nānum
maḷakhu-p-pala vaḍiyen”*¹².

I am also thy old servant, my benevolent Lord, like Selvan, the greatest, enjoying the patronage of the Ruler of the masses, the most benevolent.

Discipline—Personal and Environmental

The condition in the land during the time of Selvanambi appears in two aspects. In the work called *Peri Ālvār-Tirūmoḻi* in the IV cantox, the IV decade points to this fact. The vagarants in the eyes of the 'wise are a burden on earth. They are a liability to society only because inspite of all efforts they do not find anything of value beyond their personal want. They live 'dead'. They are, however, neither to be despised nor hated, they deserve to be the victims of pity. An expression about them is that the things they use must have committed sins "*Pāvam Satdanadām*". Beyond consumption and idling away their time they have no interest. Habit is, therefore, an unhindered process of keeping the bright life in perpetual slumber finally paving the way to extinction. Such life is not only aimless, but it is positively injurious to society. Like the thick grown weeds these are termed *Tirivars*, who have no moorings. They are to be tolerated and every effort must be made to wake them up to the dynamic value of life.

The other section constituting society entitled to the name *Adityār* is ever alert to the truth that it is under the control of the basic power and that life should accordingly be a course of discipline conforming to the direction of the indwelling impulse. The term *Adityār* is derived from the word *Adi* which means the source, the sole master and *Adiyār* reflects the idea of belonging to that *Adi* and therefore inherently wedded to a life of discipline. This is inborn self-discipline and not mere social discipline. If such people emerge and build a society, an air freedom, joy, affection and satisfaction would fill the atmosphere. Providing such an atmosphere is equally necessary, though it is secondary as compared to self-discipline which is experienced under superior control. In an atmosphere of this nature it would be next to impossible for the vagrant section to commit pillage. The atmosphere further has an indirect effect on the vagrants who will be forced to change their outlook in due course and give up their anti-social and ultimately suicidal behaviour even though they may not actively contribute towards social well-being. The expression "*Viḷainda dāniamum Irākkādar, mindu koḷḷaki rargaḷe*"¹³.

'The crops grown, the looters will not lay their hands upon'.

Is noteworthy as recording the influence of the disciplined over the vagrants.

Production and Distribution¹⁴

Parakāla in his work *Pertya Tirumoli* describes the crops produced in the land. The most important of them are 'Sennel (paddy), *Palā* (jack), *Tengu* (coconut), *Vālai* (plantain), *Kāi* (roots), *Kari* (vegetables), *Karumbu* (sugarcane), *Kamugam* (nuts), *Mā* (mango) and the like. Nature's bounty is appreciated by Viṣṇucitta who describes the field as the unfailing granary in every way. 'Sennel or polisul Tirukkōttiyūr—fields covered by paddy'. In spite of Nature's bounty and of the sufficiency of food produce and supply, there may be occasions where shortage of supply and the increasing volume of demand might affect the normal economic life. Even if a handful of food material costs much and goes far beyond the expected purchasing power of the man as could be normally fancied in society under such conditions, men would not permit themselves a change of mind or mood. They would not withhold supply. Nor would they indulge in making a high demand for what they supply. The healthy method is as stated¹⁵.

*"Kāṣin-vāi karam viṭkilum
Karavādu—maṭṭu—ili soritu"*

Though a handful is sold at a heavy rate without hiding and without laying down a condition, the supply of food was assured.

The principle of adequate supply and price control was maintained even during times of distress. People would never allow a state of depression. These factors made lasting impression on Rāmānuja as a social arrangement healthy and desirable on all accounts and he tried it with a measure of success.

*"Ākki aḍimai nilaippttanai
ennai inṇu avamē pōkki-p-pura tiṭṭadu"*¹⁶.

You put me into the frame of life for service, you made me realise that service is life. You removed the evil intention of mine and took me beyond its reach.

*'Iruḷ koṇḍa en tyar maṭṭi—i—tan nīṭil perum
Puḡaṭṭē, teruḷum teruḷ tandu
Irāmānuṣan seyyum 'semangaḷe'*¹⁷

You removed the afflicting ignorance and enabled me to regain my vision and fix my attention on your matchless virtue. Such are the benefits, many acts of benefits of Rāmānuja.

The twin aspects of Economic Functioning

The system of economic arrangement laid stress on two vital points. The idea in the expression '*Mīdu Koḷḷa*'¹⁸ is to provide a check against the tendency to accumulate as a reserve even when the need for its consumption is there. Looking up of wealth and not utilizing it in times of need is an economic crime. That should never be tolerated in society, for wealth is not the exclusive possession of an individual or a group alone to the exclusion of the rest of society.

The second crime on the economic front is in reference to the expression *Karavādu—Marrili*¹⁹. In the *Tirumoli* composed by Parakāla the *Divyadēśas*—holy regions are referred to as providing food, shelter and the like; making an offer without a thought of return and without imposing limit in quantity. In times of distress when there is a shortage of supply, advantage must not be taken to disturb the value of commodities involved in demand and supply. The situation rather calls for an attitude of helping society to have sufficient quantity at normal rates. The common tendency experienced in commerce is exploitation in abnormal situations to further enrich the possessor and to impoverish the purchaser. Such tendencies imperceptibly creep into the body politic of economics and pave the way for tampering with the healthy system in which the principle of 'Live and Let live' operates. The gist of this is that wealth should not be kept idle because by nature it is a liquid stuff. This scheme of economic sufficiency of the institution came to be known as '*Rāmānuja kūta*'²⁰.

Human Organism and Economic Principle

The body which we maintain with great care and affection has a lesson for us in our economic life in society. An alert mind can very well learn from 'books and brooks'. The only trouble is that the knowledge thus obtained remains momentary and the enduring benefit from that knowledge develops into a fancy. To make the point clear. Nature is regular in presenting the cycle of seasons. The body that we have is a conglomeration of the elements that constitute nature, viz., earth, water, fire, wind and ether called the *Pañcabhūtas* (the five elements). Our habit and attempt in life are to protect ourselves against the abnormal influence of nature which surrounds us. During the summer we need materials that could control the adverse effects of the summer. Similar is the habit during the other seasons. The protective measure that we employ

is an expression of our not needing anything in excess of actual requirements. So, too our habit seeks to possess what appears to be in short supply. This is the truth we learn about the economics of nature, if we may say so, and its value to life. The same law applies in the matter of food supply and other needs which we consider essential for life. They are earth, water, light, air and space to stay. These five elements constituted the minimum necessity for the preservation of life. Remembering that this is the basic key to life, Rāmānuja preferred a surrounding in which these elements were easily obtainable. It should not be assumed that the idea was a creation of Rāmānuja's mind, rather he discovered the value and preferred to provide mankind with facilities which would continue without a break so that man could continue his life with minimum exertion. This idea was responsible for the maintenance and development of water resorts, fields and gardens, *maṇḍapas* and dwellings cut out of rock. Besides the staple food grown and cereals along with the trees, such as plantains and coconuts considered *Kalpavṛkṣa* (*Kalpavṛkṣa*—a tree that yields for all times), Sources of perennial supply were found in plenty. Herbs and flowers were grown which served the purposes of health and charm. In all these places the most notable thing was the provision for temple. An atmosphere of piety and veneration was provided for by installing a divine icon which would function as the centre of 'Spiritual Experience'—mental mood in which mutual difference and personal preference are held under check, a factor essential to mankind both to the eye and the mind, in its own way explaining the source of reality functioning as the ground, the means and the goal of life on its journey towards unhindered progress.

Life's journey towards Unhindered Progress

Regular worship and festivals were arranged according to the tradition set up in the *Veda*, an aspect of experience. Spiritual in essence and material in form with the view that the spiritual factor in life may not be forgotten or undervalued. Rāmānuja was more a believer in self-reliance and in the function of service in a voluntary spirit out of love²¹.

*"Paricaryā—Karaṇāya
Parigṛhniṣya iti yācamansḥ"*

Please accept me for rendering service—thus he prays.

The spirit behind this was his unwillingness to demand any

benefit or command service from others. He believed that maintaining an untenable attitude would result in the disappearance of the view of human equality and dignity. Even in the field of interdependence he seems to have encouraged the doctrine of 'Serve' and then be 'served' if need be. In other words, he emphasised the importance of the impulse of privilege. This doctrine is traceable to the system of social order that prevailed during the time of Selvanambi who never ignored the lofty ideal he followed most scrupulously. The economic relevance is found in the expression—

"Kōvindan kuṇam pāḍuār ula naṭṭinul"

In a land where people would recount with joy the virtue of Govinda, the looters cannot lay their hands on the crops grown there.

Lord Krishna who as the word Govinda suggests evinced His interest in the welfare of the cattle. The word 'Govindan' refers to Lord Krishna. But the relevance of the word is to the function of the Lord to extend protection to cattle as a mark of duty without which He would be unworthy of Himself.

The need to meet the Legitimate Demand

The economic provision contemplated by Rāmānuja was based on the doctrine of meeting the need of the individual to the full. The needs of the people are not the same in kind or quantity. But satisfaction is uniform experience. This point is illustrated in an event during the time of Rāmānuja at Mēlukōṭe. The event is called significantly "*Aḷḷum* (Draw) *taḷḷum* (drive), *Sirappu* (function)"²². It is cryptically known as the festival of 'Draw and Drive'. Uniformity was not to be confined to the supply of material. But it should be with reference to meeting in full the hunger. This outlook of Rāmānuja exhibited in this event is recorded in a general way by Amudanar in his Tamil composition on Rāmānuja "The Prapanna Gāyatri" where he uses two significant expressions about the ācārya.

*"Tannaṁ uṟṟār anṟi
Tannaṁ uṟṟār illai."*²³

People have no disposition to serve except those who are devoted to him—Rāmānuja.

Generally people follow the word of the master not his intention

conveyed in the word. The meaning intended by the *ācārya* in his direction to the needy person is—'draw as much as you actually need' to meet your hunger. The direction to the distributor is 'push the provision within the reach of the recipient to his real satisfaction. The speciality that attaches to the institution of Rāmānujakūta is that the economic involvement in the form of offer or acceptance does not lead to a change in social status among the participants. The offer is in all humility placed for the public through the spiritual link which alone is the binding factor among beings. The recipient does not feel personally inferior to or obliged to the contributing partner, because he receives whatever he is offered in the temple by others in the spiritual environment. The environment, therefore, keeps all people at the same level towards one another as the dependents of the spiritual force. The giving and the receiving attitude do not create a sense of superiority or inferiority, since every individual is wedded to the twin principle in life of give and take. He feels he is only the instrument or the channel of cosmic operation. This principle that man is but an instrument and not an author is contained in the *Kapyāsa concept*. The water from the ocean is received through the earth which produce a lotus which blossoms and through its beauty delights the world. There is no direct relationship between the ocean and the lotus. The sun is the centre of activity. He draws and delivers the water. The lotus is benefited and it has earned in sanskrit for the Sun the distinction of being *Kamala bāndhu* (the inseparable companion of the lotus). It is the function that binds people together and no one function can be said to be different from another in point of status or contribution. Each function in its own place has its uniqueness which cannot be shared by others. The emphasis on the institution of temple in social life serves another important purpose in the absence of which all evils of like make their appearance. Economic life is based on the principle of production and distribution involving the mental and material factors of production, demand and distribution which concern only the intelligent section of creation which realises that interdependence is the basic factor of social life.

The source power of Life and Society

According to Rāmānuja, this interdependence is not direct between the individuals as it fails to recognize the basic factor of existence. The spiritual element invisible to normal awareness holds the many together in the light of which no two individuals can be said to be

directly associated with each other to the exclusion of the sustaining spiritual basis²⁴.

*“Parama-puruṣa-vyatiriktānām
Paraspara-seṣa seṣabhāvabhāvāt
tad-vyatiriktam prati seṣata
duḥkam eva sarvaih ātma-yāthātmya
vidbhīh sevyah puruṣottama īka eva”*:

Direct relationship between individuals to the exclusion of the source-power does not exist. To act on the basis of direct link ends in misery. Only the Supreme is served by the enlightened.

Unless this idea operates in life human nature would not move along the way of undisturbed harmony. The sustaining element inspires awe and affection, devotion and dedication in life. No human being can be an exception to this unless he allows his mind to rust and rot. The system of barter here appears in the concept of the deity an object of common worship which handles the give and take of whatever is used as a commodity for consumption. The barter transaction viewed in this spiritual light projects the fine instinct and qualities which otherwise may not develop. Vanity and patronage on the part of the offering agent and depression and dependence characterising the consumer at the receiving point would be kept under check. The man who offers develops the spirit of devotion and humility realising that the offer he makes is a part of cyclic phenomenon in which as a recipient through the mercy of the deity what he is able together, he would spare as an offer. The recipient for his part receives the offer with all devotion and humility, and permits himself to develop an attitude of service in some form of which he would be capable. This mood and temperament being common to both the giver and the receiver keep them together in a pleasant atmosphere so that they shall continue to be co-workers in their own way in the service of the deity. If this attitude could be spread in any other way, it would not be unwellcome.

Contribution to preserve Economic Equilibrium

Experience proves that only the spiritual awareness kept alive and functioning in temples could keep man in this elevated condition. This was one of the main intentions of the great *ācārya* when he recommended that the old tradition may be continued in the

temple which was looked upon as the store-house of production and the centre of distribution²⁵. The following extracts serve to explain the point

*"Parama puruṣo hi svaktyena
Jivātmana, svaktiyaiscā karaṇa
Kalabaro-praṇaiḥ svalīla-prayojanāya
Karmāṇi arabhate. Atah
Kṣut-nivṛtyādikam api
Phalam tat-sādhana-bhūtamcā
Karma, parama-purūṣasya eva"*.

The supreme person is indeed, with His dependent *Jivatma* (Human mind) and with His instruments (sense organs), body and breath, for the sake of sportive experience, indulges in various acts. Therefore the result such as removing hunger and such like and the act leading to that end, all these are the Supreme Person alone.

*"Tannai uṇṇar aṇṇi
Tannai uṇṇār illai"*²⁶.

People have no disposition to serve except those who are devoted to Him—Rāmānuja.

With this spirit operating in society rich donations were made to the temples. Occasions were arranged for assemblage and substantial supply was made to those that gathered. The devotee who receives now an unexpected supply in the temple is totally ignorant about the donor. Likewise the donor never knew who would be benefitted by his donation. This interdependence between the giver and the receiver is raised to an impersonal level which is preserved and improved upon by later generations constituting society. It is not surprising to note here that the individuals were not quite rich, but they never felt any want in life. The temples were extremely rich and the benefits were extended to every one that would not refuse. Human nature being what it is, one experiences lapses more often than not, with the consequence that here is a perpetual struggle between the two classes of people connected with the temple. One tries to keep the temple as a centre of undiminishing plenty and the other considering this type as a manoeuvre to exploit the many to protect the idle interest of the few.

Humility—An ethical Instrument of Economic Stability

It is common experience that a person who earns through personal exertion utilizes his wealth for personal use. Other persons have no right to expect from him for their comfort the benefits of his toil. Thus there comes to be in society a disparity between persons. Some people cannot earn enough, some people cannot consume the entire wealth. Thus plenty and poverty appear side by side, leading to feelings which reduce men to the degrading position of unwelcome associates. The blame for this kind of situation rests mostly on that section which earns more than enough. If only the earning section would share its wealth willingly with others who could not earn for want of knowledge and capacity, social evil would be absent, because both the possessing and the non-possessing would be converted to the possessing group. As a result, the higher qualities of sympathy, generosity, affection, gratitude and respect would emerge, qualities which would hold society united.

It is from this point of view that Rāmānuja occupied the pulpit in the temple at a place called Gosthipura²⁷, and shared his wealth of the secret of joy and self protection with the public which he received from his master Gosthipūrṇa, with a guarded solemn promise that the wealth would be scrupulously guarded and its value not allowed to suffer by wasting it among those ignorant of its worth or use. Rāmānuja gave the promise to his master in all solemnity only to break it and be the victim of the master's curse, for he felt social prosperity was greater in significance than individual prosperity.

The style of Economic Functioning

For the first time in the line of leaders interested in the welfare of society, we come across a person who evolves a system of providing the masses with food and shelter, an institution which was later named 'Rāmānuja-kūta' referred to on a previous occasion. The periodic functions of what has come to be known as *Maṇḍapotsava* (to provide a spiritual climate) owe their origin mostly to Rāmānuja. The religious motive apart, the secular side of providing food and shelter is as significant as it is interesting. This is not an invention of Rāmānuja. He discovered that the *Āhvars* in their sacred hymns had recognized and appreciated the importance of such institutions for providing the public with food and shelter and with clothing as well. This aspect is more emphasised in the *Dravida Veda* than in the Sanskrit section of the *Veda*. The recipient of the benefit in

the scheme would be induced actively to associate himself in service in conformity with his capacity without violating the enduring scheme of service ritual. The divine seer Parakāla by name has given expression in his section of contribution to Vedic culture to this idea in the VII, vii-8 of the work known as 'Periya Tirumōḷi'. He addresses the Master, "My Lord, I am here dependent entirely on thee, I have resisted pulls from the cruel associates, I have taken shelter under you. Give me food and clothing and other things and admit me to your service"²⁸.

Viṣṇucitta, another contributor to this culture, in his Peri Āḷvār Tirumōḷi addresses the Master thus—"My Lord, do not hesitate to accept my service suspecting that you may have to shoulder the burden of feeding me. You need not take the trouble of providing me with food, clothing and shelter, for in the temple, a scheme of service is instituted and I find my shelter, food and clothing there"²⁹.

The problem is to find the provisions to feed. The same Viṣṇucitta in the decade beginning with the verse—'Navakāriyam' IV, iv refers to two categories of persons. The first category consists of idlers who are a load and liability and who do not in the least assist in programmes to protect and promote the interest of society. It is not to condemn them totally as misfits of society, but to instil into their minds that they cannot evade their contribution to society and only remain a drain on the social wealth. The other category consists of people who shoulder the responsibility of distributing economic aid and prevent the economic wealth against pilfering and destruction. Reference is made on previous occasion to one by name Selvan of exemplary behaviour and outlook in charge of socio-economic administration, who was looked upon as one with affection flowing out to people and ever alert to the needs of the public. The relevant portion is worth quoting³⁰.

*"Naḷirnda sīlan, nayācalan
abhimāna tūnganai nādorūm
Talinda selvanst-c-cevagam
Koṇḍa senganmal tiru-k-kottiyūr
Kulirndu reiginra kōvindan kuṇam pāduvār uḷlanttinuḷ
Viḷainda daniyamum irakkadar
Mīndu koḷḷa kilārajaḷ".*

The looters cannot lay their hands on the crops grown in the region where people sing the virtues of Govinda who dwells happily in Tirukottiyūr, where the service is accepted

of the pure minded 'Selvanambi offered every day who is the noblest with affection and of spotless character and comforting habits.

This great man Selvanambi set up an administration in a way that even the wicked, looters and plunderers would not venture to disturb the economic scheme arranged under the guidance of the master. Godowns were not under lock and key, but yet people did not suffer for want of sufficient food. Nor did they act under the pressure of greed to grab wealth.

This was the principle that Rāmānuja kept in mind when he thought of an arrangement to help society economically in his own way. While he discovered this in the ancient works on Vedic culture, he also introduced an element of fascination towards the super secular force in life which kept humanity together in mutual respect and affection. Though he did not name the institution *Rāmānujakūta*, the institution was run by his followers in his name. The well-to-do would make an offer and stand by. There Kutas used to feed those who came to them.

Agriculture Labour

The principle followed by Rāmānuja may be considered to be the system of voluntary tenancy governed by the doctrine of regulated labour which permits the toiling agent to retain a share and treat his toil as contribution to service (service in the form of manual labour) to the deity to whom the produce is conveyed. It may be considered a cruel and cynical remark to state that attempts connected with agricultural reforms are posing insurmountable problems now perhaps because the deity concept is divorced from the scene of integrated life.

Village Life

Likewise, Rāmānuja had relished the maintenance of small villages around the temple in preference to big towns and cities which paraded as the 'pomp house' of mighty monarchs and emperors. His words in this connection addressed to the gathering at Mēlukōṭe which had to be converted from being a dense forest to a habitable locality are—

*"Kutim kṛtvā tasmīn yadugīrti tate nitya vasatiḥ"*³¹

Small dwellings may be built on the slopes of Mēlukōṭe.
People must live permanently.

Rāmānuja had not relished the idea of converting the small villages into crowded towns.

He preferred a system where canals could be dug to make water available for perennial water supply.

*"Kādam palavum tirindu ulalverkku
aṇḍu or niḷal illai—nirum illai"*³².

To us covering a long distance neither shelter nor water is within reach. 'Shadow' in this context is understood as shelter.

To solve this problem of water supply, Rāmānuja preferred a system which could provide for the construction of canals to make water available always. In that hilly region of Mēlukōṭe where his impact could be really felt in all possible walks of life, a good number of wells, ponds, lakes etc., were brought into existence indicating the working of the hygienic instinct of Rāmānuja. In almost all places we have side by side with the ponds, a mini pond. The tank Kalyāṇi that he got built in Mēlukōṭe is a marvellous structure with perennial supply of water from some spot in the underground and the ground tank at Toṇḍanūr, a few miles to the south of Mēlukōṭe is a marvel of Rāmānuja's engineering skill³³. In addition, trees and plants were grown in plenty to provide shade and scent. In other words, he preferred the protection promised by nature to the protection artificially substituted by the genius of the human mind.

Division of Labour

Though a person is competent to discharge any work assigned to him, yet it is an undeniable fact that by inheritance he has a knack for a particular type of work in life. This is the normal instinct accompanying from the time of birth and the instinct only requires a congenial environment for natural growth.

Side by side with this we find in experience what may be termed the grafted instinct, that is, in addition to the normal instinct that is associated with birth, another talent in the form of instinct shows itself also alongside the natural instinct. It is talent in the sense that is not common to human species. It is not unnatural because it is a normal aspect as the other instinct is. Thus we find rare cases of talents where the consideration of birth does not come in the way of recognizing the value of the talent. This is known as the abnormal side of the normal phenomenon and it is given the status and respect which the possessor of the talent in the form

of instinct would receive as an individual belonging to the species to which this talent normally belongs.

This does not mean that Rāmānuja is quite blind to the distribution of work based on the inherited instinct which according to tradition goes by the name of caste-based on the doctrine of 'Karma' or 'performance frequency'. Rāmānuja therefore rules out the doctrine of inequality among individuals in society. The functions of persons only enable them to rise higher in the same cadre to feel the pulse of purity, freshness, enthusiasm and perseverance to move further in the direction towards perfection.

Industrial Production

Rāmānuja Mēlukōṭe in particular accepted the services to the temple of other classes of people, namely, potters, weavers, washermen, the bearers of the pslanquin of the deity. The repsodistis and several other groups formed parts of the temple upkeep³⁴. The arrangement has in course of time greatly changed. His idea seemed to have been to encourage small industries, keep people engaged, find a use for what they produced and keep society self-sufficient in that way. Industry as we understand now is the substitution of inanimate energy for human energy. The advantage of the industrial system is large production conserving human energy and saving time. Human energy is forced to seek other venues of activity since the machine has been substituted for the hand. This idea of the advantage or otherwise of human energy being allowed to enjoy 'Leisure' might have occurred to Rāmānuja or he might have not preferred it. It is the belief even today among the conservative traditionalists that over-production on the one side, lack of opportunity to work on the other contribute to a condition of restlessness which should not be permitted. It may be noted in this connection that the women-folk would form plates to serve the purpose of feeding. They were assigned the task of keeping the temple precincts clean and attractive. The spiritual responsibility of the women-folk was to keep the home and environment clean and pleasant.

Pooling of Resources : (Permanent—Periodic—General and Specific)

Pooling of resources is a pre-requisite to effect distribution in a fair and satisfactory manner. The distribution is for the public and to that effect collection is also from the public. The clouds are formed from the ocean and they feed the land with water. The

unused quantity of the rain water enters the ocean again. This is the cycle of unending demand and offer. Without the clouds there could be no rains. Without the ocean cloudes will not be formed.

Regular supply from the public for their welfare through the receiving centre is perhaps the basis of the law of taxation. The pooling is of various types. It may be permanent or periodic. It may be for a public purpose or to preserve a particular aspect of social life. The offer may be made regularly or it may take the form of a permanent grant or donation. The only binding factor is, in all these cases, the pooling authority in charge of the trust shall be barred from abusing the trust or diverting it as that would seriously affect the trust reposed by the public. In this sphere of building property for social welfare, Rāmānuja endorsed the system of philanthropy in its broadest sense. Following it many persons endowed temples and public institutions in particular with a portion of their personal assets. These were collected, preserved and developed to promote the type of social life that Rāmānuja envisaged. Gifts have been made on a large scale in various forms for different purposes under the broad heading "Charity and Endowment". They are recorded in various inscriptions of Karnāṭaka. For example, an inscription from Belur dated A.D.1117 records³⁵. The consecration of the great temple at Velāpura of Belūr, Where the king was living dedicated to Vijayanārāyaṇa under the name of Chennakēśava. According to this inscriptional evidence, he was devoted to the worship of Purushotama. He was in his residence Velāpura, and set up with faith the God Vijayanārāyaṇa and provided for the daily ceremonies, the decorations and the offerings three times to Vijayanārāyaṇa and Lakshminārāyaṇa, and for the livelihood of the Srīvaiṣṇava Brāhmaṇas, of the dancing girls, the potters on the vestments, the learned men, the garland-makers, lighters of lamps and all the attendants, he made grants of villages. Whatever surplus income may accrue, to be devoted to offerings to the faithful and to temple repairs. Thus was it ordered by the eleventh coronation, Vishnuvardhana Hoysaḷadēva.

A 14th Century inscription on the wall of the big kitchen of the Nārāyanaswamy temple at Mēlukōṭe records, that, while Vīra Ballāḷa was ruling the kingdom, Mādappadannāyaka and Kaṭappa-daunāyaka, sons of Mahāpradhāna Perumāḷe dannāyaka of Eḍaṭale made a grant of land to Lakshmaṇadās, in order to provide annually 15 gulas of eleyatti to God Tirunārāyaṇa of Mēlukōṭe³⁶.

Another inscription of the 14th Century found at Garuḍa temple

in the Nāmadakatṭe garden records that Immadi Rauvttarāya Mādappa-dannāyaka, son of Perumāludēva-dannāyaka of Heḍḍāṭale, made over the title of land noticed by Emberumānār as *Tirumaṇ* (holy earth) to God Tirumanna Perumāḷ, as a charity⁸⁷.

Another Telugu inscription in the characters of 16th and 17th Centuries found on the top of the rock in Mudibetta near the town Mēlūkōṭe records that may be it be auspicious obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja. This is the service of the flower garden rendered by the illustrious Mahāmandalēśwara Rāmārajāyyadeva and Ucabajamma to God Nārāyaṇa⁸⁸.

A Tamil inscription of the 14th Century in the temple at Tonnūr, records a gift of land to the Rāmānuja-Matha by the Mahājanas⁸⁹.

The scheme of participation in a social set-up as envisaged by Rāmānuja, is demonstrated in the Karnāṭaka state. The idol of Srī Nārāyaṇa at Mēlūkōṭe which gave a call to Rāmānuja to move towards it is a fact of experience among the orthodox. But from the social point of view as understood by Rāmānuja, it is of immense value to an alert and dynamic member of the society. Biography records that Rāmānuja left behind his ascetic robes and entered the region of Karnāṭaka in white robes. He changed over the his *Sanyāsa* dress at the lake, *Vedapushkarini* in the presence of the divine entity Dattatreya, carved in stone Mēlūkōṭe (the fort in the west) was a thick forest uninhabited. Rāmānuja first discovered the deity and built a township around it with the help, of course, of his disciple Vishnuvardhana. The region reminds one of the plan that Rāmānuja had in his mind to form a society where with the co-operation of one and all that glory of harmonious relationship could be experienced.

Treating the deity as the symbol of guiding spirit Rāmānuja personally attempted to induce persons to enter the society and maintain through their efforts that lofty level.

It is in Karnāṭaka that Rāmānuja actually tried his scheme of social structure and organisation. The dense forest became during his time a model village which served as a model for other places in South India. The village is rightly named 'Tirunārāyaṇapura'. It is a village presided over by Nārāyaṇa, the ground and goal of society (the term signifies the ground of existence and the goal of evolution, involving the principles of power and mercy). It is bountiful '*Tiru*' where people are not denied their need nor are they over-loaded with plenty.

Rāmānuja next started to convert this region into a pretty

paradise. It is in this context that the secular mind appreciates Rāmānuja's contribution to social welfare in different walks of life.

Donations and Contributions in Karnātaka

Under the inspiration of Rāmānuja was formulated an administration perhaps initiated by Vishnuvardhana himself. With the efforts of the *Sthānikas* local guardians of the Mēlukoṭe temple and the *ācāryapurushas* custodians of culture associated with the temple at Mēlukoṭe, the chieftains, the well to do nobles as also the common man came forward with rich offerings of village, lands, jewellery and whatever could be spared by them to be pooled together for the maintenance of the temple. The management was mostly with the temple *Sthānikas*.

The mode of utilising the contribution was in strict conformity with tradition of the ritual in the temple. To feed the visiting devotees the resident devotees engaged in various services not on a contract basis, for no compulsion was recognised which would interfere with the freedom of the spirit of service in worship. Even in the absence of *Sthānikas* and the *ācāryapurushas* on spiritual and administrative mission, their share of right was neither questioned nor denied. Inscriptional evidence is available in plenty from various sources over a long period of time; (the text and translation are given in the Appendix No. 2).

Even during the regime of the Mahārājas of Mysore we find several inscriptions about gifts offered in addition to service, strictly in conformity with the tradition that was obtaining in the temple. Even in the present day devotees in possession of fluence are engaged in following the lead given by the *ācāryas*.

The mite of the Acāryapurushas (Cultural Custodians) after Rāmānuja

Natives of Mēlukoṭe who belonged to the *ācāryapurushas* branch have also contributed their mite in this direction by gathering a large body of Sisyas (disciples) from all communities in the State of Mysore. It may be mentioned in this connection that one Kesavacaryaswamin celebrated for his connection with *Tiruvāimoli* —the *Drāviḍa Vedānta*, had a son by name Srinivasa. When the boy was in his teens, under the inspiration of Lord Narsimha of Ahobilam now in the Andhra State, this moved to Ahobilam and was, to his surprise, led to the *āśram* of *Sanyāsa* under the name *Adtvan Sathakona Swamin*. Under his influence Srī Krishnadevaraya the King of Vijayanagara wrote a book in Telugu under the name.

'Āmuktamālyada' in which he particularly celebrated his *guru*, the Mēlukōṭe ascetic and offered many gifts to the deity at Mēlukōṭe⁴⁰. Subsequently the *śiṣyas* of the various *ācāryapurushas* united to create institutions of their *ācāryas* for purposes of arranging temple worship and feeding the devotees on special occasions. The *Sihānikas* (official retinue) also moved among the enlisted people belonging to the lay group to inspire the latter to make contributions to run the temple along the lines indicated by Śrī Rāmānujācārya.

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CHAPTER VI

Rāmānuja and the Social Field

Social Pattern Before the Advent of Rāmānuja—The Brahmin—The Pioneer in the Field of Social Purity and Upliftment—The Function of Ācārya—Enhancement of the Quality of Social Life Through Practice—Rāmānuj's Aversion Towards Discriminatory Treatment in Society on the Basis of Mere Caste Hierarchy—The Episode of Dhanurdasā—The Stigma of Social Arrogance Removed—The Tiru-k-Kulattār—The Sin of Segregation—Non-adjustment and Accommodation—The Śattadārs—Origin and Early Habitation—Inspired Privilege—Service to Ramanuja—Śattadars and the Development of Art—The Contribution of Śattadārs—Costume, Custom and Habit—Family Names—Position and Status of Women in the Śrīvaiṣṇava Society.

Social pattern before the Advent of Rāmānuja

Hindu society, in the course of its evolution, has witnessed both radical and progressive trends. In India, Hindu religion and society were inseparable. To a Hindu his religion was a way of life. Hence any reformer who wanted to reform Hindu society had to be a religious man too. This was the trend in pre-Rāmānuja period. The same may be applicable to Rāmānuja also. But the nature and impact depended upon the personality of the individual also who wanted to reform the Hindu society. The period in which Rāmānuja lived demanded the reforming trends in Hindu society. The emergence of Rāmānuja heralded a mass awakening in society and became an all-inclusive movement.

The Brahmin—The pioneer in the field of Social Purity and Upliftment

Brahminism has come to be associated with the most refined section of society. The word 'Brahmin' is a cognate of the basic Real which in the *Vedas* is termed 'Brahman'—the biggest and therefore the best. It is because of this proximity of the Brahmin in his outlook to the nature of Brahman that he continues to be

the best evolved¹.

"Mēyum nallōr

Ekkutta—vālar, Edu pirappu, ēdu

yalvāga ninrōr, akkuttam, appirappu

avviyalvā naimmai ālko!lume"

Fortunate people deeply devoted to Rāmānuja might have been wicked in deeds, polluted of pedigree or intolerable by nature, those very defects which moved them the Rāmānuja would also help me to keep near to him.

The vice if it leads man towards the wise, it takes the place of virtue. Vice gets transformed to virtue. The victim of such acts is the agent himself. The purport of the above verse is that persons with deep devotion might have been associated with any crime, birth and habit. These factors would be a source of encouragement for us to progress in life in the right direction. The idea behind this is that birth and behaviour do not always control the mind. This is the philosophy of Rāmānuja (which he preached and practised) based on *apṛthak-siddhi*. Legends have been numerous in the *Purāṇa* regarding the treatment to be accorded to the brahmin class. The power possessed by the brahmin was far Superior to all other types of power. The incident is recorded in which Vasiṣṭha the sage wielding spiritual power and Viśvāmitra, a great warrior, an embodiment of secular power chanced to meet each other. An interesting development of this meeting is recorded in the *Itihāsa* and *Purāṇas* to emphasise the worth and value of both types of power. The King Viśvāmitrā openly admitted the inferiority of the material to the spiritual power, exclaiming—

"Dhik baḥam kṣatriya baḥam,

*Brahma tejo—baḥam baḥam"*².

A brief biographic sketch of Viśvāmitra's life is recorded in the *Ramāyaṇa*. The warrior was over-powered by the mendicant, the latter wielding a power which would vanquish an enemy without extinguishing him. This power Viśvāmitra was able to possess after his encounter with Vasiṣṭha. The brahminised warrior felt satisfied after he was acknowledged as such by Vasiṣṭha. The impact of the *Ramāyaṇa* on the social aspect of life is full and complete according to the Śrīvaiṣṇavas.

Amudanār describes Rāmānuja as—

“*Irāmāyaṇam enrum pattivellam kuḍi koṇḍa koll*”.⁸

Rāmānuja is a reservoir in which is gathered the flood of yearning for association, namely, the Rāmāyaṇa.

The purpose here is the demonstration of the basic principle in social life. The mode, if any, in society must serve to elevate, but the model should not be to pull down. This method of elevation in life starts from envy and jealousy which, though they are not virtues, may yet be converted into virtues provided they are not utilized towards supplanting or extinguishing the higher values of life accordingly on the part of the brahmin. It is his basic responsibility to educate, elevate and in the end, if there be a need, even to emulate the person who was formerly less fortunate. This social aspect by behaviour, admonition and by contribution was an important aspect of the brahmin which could not be neglected or set aside. The function denied, the spirit disappears and the claim becomes untenable.

Rāmānuja, belonging to the brahmin group, was aware of this. Strict orthodoxy prescribed a six-fold duty for the brahmin in society—*Yajña* and *Yājña* observe the ritual and direct the performance, *Adhyayana*—*Adhyāpana*—learning and teaching, *Dāna* and *Pratigraha*—offering and receiving offers.

The function of the Ācārya—Enhancement of the quality of Social Life through Practice

The *ācārya* held a loftier outlook. The mandate mentioned above relates to an aspect of life here, but such a life would be crippled and imperfect as long as the basic support of the life-stream is ignored or excluded. Life here must not only be smooth and healthy. It must also be happy and energetic. Thus the basic aim would be to enable every individual to realise the significance of that basic spirit and shape life accordingly. Mere awareness of the goal is not more important than the keen desire not to miss the goal and, equally, the determination not to swerve from the path which is the only gateway to the goal. Persons choosing this way of life, caste, and other considerations apart, deserve full regard and allegiance. This is what Rāmānuja means by the term *Bhakti-Samāgama*⁴ (association with the wise).

“*Samsāra-viṣa-vṛkṣasya
dye phale amṛtopame*

*Kādācit Keśava bhaktiḥ
Tad-bhaktairvā samāgamah*"

The poisonous tree of the cycle of life projects two fruits which serve as nectar, sometime in life the devotional attitude towards the Lord or preferably to His devotees. (the company of the wise opens the eyes sometime in life towards wisdom).

The inequality which comes to light under the caste system is treated as a sign of defect in the context of *Bhakta-samāgama* (association with the wise).

This spirit of Rāmānuja was made known in his conduct before and after the ablution ritual in the Cāuveri at Śrīrangam as previously stated. Another incident makes this point still clearer. Here it is the case of the difference in attitude that the two brahmin disciples of Rāmānuja exhibited. The two persons were none other than the eminent Kuréśa and Daśarathi. It is again a story which in itself may be of no significance to the common mind. But a great principle is discovered in it which is vital to life from the lofty cultural stand. Social custom demanded that a person of unclean stuff and style shall not move about in the midst of the elite and the elegant.⁵ As Rāmānuja was passing through the streets of Śrīrangam where men had gathered to have his *darshan*, it is reported that a certain woman was moving the opposite direction and She could not avoid being in the midst of the crowd in the presence of the *ācārya*, Rāmānuja. Dāśarathi and Kuréśa were heading the procession and served as the vanguard. Dāśarathi advised the woman to recede and keep aloof till the *ācārya*, passed through the street. The woman who found herself in a helpless situation mechanically exclaimed, "Master tell me whither I might go. I cannot fly. I am without wings. The earth is hard. I cannot cave in. I cannot get back for the river Cauveri is holy. I cannot move forward for the great *ācārya* is coming".⁶ This observation quickly moved Kuréśa to reaction and his response to this situation was equally significant and elevating. Kuréśa addressed his friend against the attitude which prompted the woman to reveal her plight. Śāstras might mean pollution in the event of good and evil getting mixed. True culture demands that self-purification is preferable to directing others to behave.

This principle based on the regard that is due to every one under the Sun is not an innovation started by Rāmānuja or his contem-

poraries. The *Guruparamparā* records that this principle has traditional sanction for it. Śrī Rāmā in the Rāmāyaṇa has employed the method of *Brahmamedha*—the privilege of the saints and seers to a bird by name Jaṭāyu when it laid down its life on behalf of Sītā a little with Rāvaṇa. Rāma was a human being, a prince with great accomplishments. The bird Jaṭāyu had for its privilege the accident of fighting against cruel power and yet it had the privilege of post-mortem treatment reserved for the most enlightened. Secondly, in the Mahābhārata Yudhiṣṭhira, the Paṇḍava chief, offered a similar treatment of Vidura, an uncle of his who unfortunately was deemed lower in casts, because he was a *dāsiputra*—the son of a maid servant. In the same way Periyānāmbi welcomed the privilege of offering *Brahmamedha* treatment to a *Śattāda Śrīvaiṣṇava*, his classmate Māraṇérināmbi by name, considering him as the 'Brahmin in mind', though not in body. This indicates the wisdom of the course that is to be adopted towards the 'Godly' in preference to the general course prescribed for the various castes and creeds to maintain social order not interfering with the tastes and talents of members constituting society.

An incident in the life of Rāmānuja relates to his association with people in society. Rāmānuja returned from Yadavaprakāśa, very sad and disappointed. He found the master not above an ordinary man, for he was still the victim of passions, envy and revenge though an exalted student of the *Vedānta*. While staying in Kañci he noticed that one Kañcīpūrṇa, not of the Brahminic group, was in the service of the Lord Varadarāja in the temple. It would appear that the said Kañcīpūrṇa enjoyed the privilege of conversing with the presiding deity. The language of conversation of course must be beyond the range of human understanding. Rāmānuja was not a meditator or an *upasaka*¹, as it is said in the *Veda* for *upasana* is developing an attitude of mind to grasp reality as it is. The result would depend upon the quality of the *upasana*. All the shortcomings of the *upasana* (observation) would continue to the end, as stated in the *Upaniṣads*. This is termed as doctrine of *Yathākratu* namely, the approach determines the achievement. Unless the approach is clean, the goal cannot be clean. Therefore, true philosophy is the result of spontaneous revelation and the function of the mind is receptive alertness. Discussion with Yādavaprakāśa did not result in definite understanding of the problem. Consequently meditation on the object of thought was not possible. Rāmānuja was still at the stage of discussion. He, therefore, moved

to discover a person who could provide him with definite knowledge of the object of meditation. He discovered by chance that Kañcīpūrṇa had the required knowledge in the form of intuition which is either a gift or the product of long standing pursuit. In his eagerness to secure this intuitive knowledge without delay Rāmānjan approached Kañcīpūrṇa. The treatment accorded to Kañcīpūrṇa is of a higher order, despite the fact that Kañcīpūrṇa did not belong to the Brahmin fold.⁸

*"Kāñcīśārcana nirataḥ pureva
Kāñcīpūrṇāryam as varada sūnṛt—oktā pātram
ācāryam nijam acikīrṣad apyavamsyam
nānyo bhavati Mahātmanām kulādih."*

As before, devoted to the worship of the Lord at Kañci, He, Rāmānuja, desired to treat as his ācārya Kañcīpūrṇārya who was the receiver of the utterances of the Lord directly. Though he belonged to a different caste, the worldly pedigree of the great does not come in for consideration.

*"Purṇo yadyapi varadānu—kampayā aham
nōyuktam dvijavara Laukika kramasya
Itiyuktvā prapāti—param sa tam nyarautsīt
nocchrāyam prathayati sajjanah svakīyam"*⁹

No doubt I am what I am under the mercy of Lord Varada. O; noble brahmin, it is improper that I should employ the technical formality. Having said so Kañcīpūrṇa halted Rāmānjan who knelt before him. Men of wisdom do not project their eminence.

Rāmānjan's aversion—towards discriminatory treatment in Society on the basis of mere Caste Hierarchy

Rāmānuja had aversion towards discriminatory treatment in society on the basis of mere caste hierarchy to the neglect of the law of humanity, that the needs of the neighbour require priority of attention and treatment. This doctrine did not, however, amount to denying and discarding, the functional value of caste in the social set up. The service aspect of caste system towards society calls for greater attention than the consideration for preserving personal equipment.

All the physical frames are but the product of *Prakṛti*, a material source with the three constituents of *Sattva* (stamina), *Rajas* (Passion) and *Tamas* (Lethargy) mixing up in various combinations.

Each one of the combinations is an equipment for the discharge of a particular function in life of the owner of that frame or body. The body and the function are brought together in a co-operative effort to serve a purpose. Discipline, *Samskāra* as it is technically termed, differs from body to body. The body, therefore, may have common features but the function to which it is put also determines its value. To ignore this is to interfere with the structure of social life. Such interference would amount to *Samkars*, adulteration, affecting the purpose of a healthy and orderly progress in society. In other words, awareness of the difference and the purpose for which the difference is recognised indicates the normal course of progress from the coarse to the refined stage in life.

If the constitution of the body is at variance with that of the mind in the human organism there arises the problem whether primary attention should be paid to the body or to the mind. A refined mind in the coarse body is preferable to a coarse mind in a refined body.

On an occasion when Rāmānuja was carrying on his studies with his master Mahapūrṇa, the wives of the pupil and the master were drawn into a quarrel in which the pupil's wife maintained that she was of a higher breed than the masters. This was an unfortunate incident between the two women. Normally the teacher's wife is entitled to respect to match the respect due to the teacher. But that was not the case to be here, for the interest of the self interfered with the discipline of civilized life.

*"Toḷumṇīr kodumin koṇṇin"*¹⁰

Engage yourself in service. (The term service precludes haggaining).

The purport is how, give and take. Though inferior by caste if, in outlook and attitude, people are of the progressive order, mix with them for the purposes.

*"Yasmin mleeche api vartate
tasmal deyam tato grāhyam
sa ca puṇya
yatā hi aham"*¹¹

If it be found even in the unruly (mleecha) make the offer to him and receive the offer. He is as worthy as myself.

The purport is, if *Bhakti* is found even in a *mleecha*, the 'rough' person, one should adopt the principle of give and take. He shall

also be worthy of respect on an equal footing with ME (The Lord of the Universe). This idea is gathered from the *Ācārya Hṛdaya*.

Rāmānuja came to know of the incident and he was furious with his wife. Between the physical frame and the mental power, the mental power has a greater value and the physical frame shall not be allowed to come in the way of according due recognition to the mental power. But cast in that frame, should the mental power suffer restriction and humiliation? The answer is in the negative. Because the body is only an adjunct to aid the progress of the mental factor, if it does not move agreeably with the mind along the lines of discipline that would be considered as an aspect which may be overlooked by people who choose the line of discipline. Thus it is that, a superior mind in a inferior caste is not denied its place of respect in society. According to Rāmānuja the real glow of caste lies not in its birth, but in its functional power. Thus Rāmānuja's view with regard to the physical body was that if it were conducive to elevation, it deserved respect. By itself, it merits neither respect nor condemnation. That being his view, Rāmānuja felt that the only limitation that the bodily frame could set as in respect of discharging the duties prescribed for various sects. That is more the responsibility of the owner of the frame than the person who is engaged in according service to him. No one individual is to be overestimated or underestimated and no one is to be excluded from his claim or share in the society. No one as a member of society can escape from making his contribution. Each individual has his place in society. Functional difference is to be retained. No chance is to be given to encroach upon the work of the other. Coercion leads to compulsion, compulsion to conflict which is unhealthy. Rāmānuja had his own conviction.

The episode of Dhanurdāsa—The stigma of Social Arrogance Removed

This attitude and behaviour of Rāmānuja is illustrated in the episode of Dhanurdāsa during his lifetime. The episode serves as a stern warning against possible lapses into arrogance. Dhanurdāsa was a person in the employ of a chieftain. He did not belong to the higher caste, namely, the *traiyarnikas* eligible to claim *Vedic* privilege. He came under the influence of Rāmānuja. He adopted the course of life which was free from elements which would pollute the social mind. One such was the awareness that a person is educated and civilized, and is worthy of respect in society. This attitude

normally carries with it the instinct of self-superiority that would permit the instinct to look down in some way or other the other members of society. Such a frame of mind is a hurdle against cultural development. Rāmānuja's nephew Daśarathi and Dhanurdasa the disciple who functioned as the constant personal attendants, would be always together. Rāmānuja in the early hours of the day used to hold the hand of Daśarathi when he proceeded to the river Cauveri, to perform the ablutions. While returning from Cauveri, after ablutions, Rāmānuja would hold the hand of Dhanurdasa and reach his *āśrama*¹². The brahmin ascetic behaviour was not in conformity with the normal social system. The explanation was that the person belonging to the higher caste was conscious of the element of such superiority, a flaw according to Rāmānuja. Dhanurdāsa was free from it. In respect of devotion and attachment both were equal. But Dhanurdāsa was free from such flaw, as he had not any factor in himself to boast of, whereas Daśarathi was the victim of the flaw brought about by the status of his birth. In the realm of healthy life, a factor to be avoided deliberately under all circumstances is the superiority complex. Otherwise the estrangement in society cannot be avoided. The contradiction apparently involved in this context of caste distinction and equal regard for all would be resolved only when the element of hierarchy is kept under check. It is not open to any one to ignore the functional demands of caste. What is expected is that the functional deference shall not affect the status of different sections of society, none of which can be excluded or avoided.

According to Rāmānuja, as revealed in this episode, humility is higher in value. Social contact with the attitude of personal humility is an accomplishment in culture, while patronage, the only other possibility, is an unhealthy aspect of character destined to lead to degradation. It also indicates superiority based on caste in the sear of advanced discipline on the part of the individual to serve society with ever decreasing self-interest. Caste system, therefore, has a social significance, in that it is progressive personal abstinence and readiness to assist others to grow in life.

The Tiru-k-Kulattār¹³—The Sin of Segregation

The intention of Rāmānuja being to discover the most sacred instinct not inconsistent with the spiritual in the behaviour of

any group or individuals belonging to society, led him to recognise and include every one to shoulder the responsibility which his instinct permitted. Vanity or self-esteem as the basis of social discrimination was a taboo. In this connection the concept of '*Tiru-k-Kulattār*' is an expression which emerges with a significance many which of the other groups of persons are not privileged to claim.

It is generally believed that Rāmānuja elevated a section of society to the status of '*Tiru-k-Kulattār*'.¹⁴ The word '*Tiru-k-Kulattār*' is an expression that can emerge only from persons of the status of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja would not degrade himself to the position of an observer satisfied with the external outlook and behaviour. He had the unique instinct and ability to connect it with the spiritual side of life. To impress upon the people the need to recognize this fundamentally normal nature, he gave expression to terms which were considered and soul-stirring. In the system of Rāmānuja the term *Śrī* associated with *Śrīvaiṣṇava* refers to an entity—an embodiment of compassion eternally associated with Viṣṇu, the all-pervading Lord wielding absolute power as Lord. The gap is between the sinning self and the flawless source of life; God is indeed infinite, but without the application of compassion chances of redemption are practically nil. As the law works in life, man's effort is a ceaseless movement from one discontent to another. Compassion extended by the Supreme bridges this gap and thus paves the way for gratitude for the aid and continuance of humility traceable to the inherent importance of the self aspiring for relief.

This is a spontaneous benefit unexpected. During the Sojourn to Méluḱōṭe from the fertile lands of Śrīrangam, Rāmānuja was in a region of thick jungle not knowing which way to move to meet the Lord of when he got a vision. The persons who moved about in that dense forest perhaps must have been *giriṅjans*—tribes belonging to the *giri*—the hills. They were able to show the way out of the forest. They prepared the path of their own accord on seeing Rāmānuja in distress. As a result of their effort, Rāmānuja was able to reach the outskirts of Méluḱōṭe where he was able to see the Lord, the eternal elixir of life. His spiritual journey as reflected in the *Vedas* completed on this earth, thanks to the unsolicited aid of the hill tribes who in spite of their rough habits and ignorance put into use the finest spirit of inborn Compassion and extended help to a person in need of it without

any thought of any return for their service. This spirit must flow only from the Goddess of compassion Śrī—a word retained in Tamil as *Tiru*. Gratefully Rāmānuja recognised the trihals as belonging to the Goddess Lakshmi. He did not change their caste, as we understand. He made them realise the sacredness of their divine instinct. Thus came into being a section with a reputation beyond the reach of many other clans. Social habits may not change; the skin, the bone and the blood may not permit any mixture or modification. But the value and status as a person on the way to assured perfection are recognised and respected. This is the contribution in the outlook of Rāmānuja in the matter of maintaining social relationship.

It may not be quite correct that the people whom Rāmānuja recognised as *Tiru-k-Kulattār* belong to the fold of the excommunicated on the basis of failures and excesses in life as members of society. Even in modern times, defections are a reality and the inadmissible doctrine of apartheid is practised even by the opponents of apartheid in some form or other keeping a particular ambition in view. In Sanskrit this is called the doctrine of *Bahiṣkāra*, excommunication.

The spirit which Rāmānuja followed is traced to an ancient prescription in this regard contained in the following verse in the context of *bhakti*.¹⁵

“*Madbhakta-jana-vātsalyam
Pūjāyām ca anumodanam
svyam abhuccāraṇam caiva
mad-arthe dambha varjanam
mat-katha sravane bhaktih
svara-netra-ange vikriya
mamanu-smaranam nityam
yacca mam upa-jiviti
bhaktih astavidhahi e sayasini
mieccheṇi vartate
tasmaideyam tatograhya
sacapuṇyo yathahi aham*”.

Affection towards my devotees
Assent to offering him worship
Outspokenness in this regard
Shedding vanity in My interest
Eagerness to hear My glory

Manifestation of the attitude through Voice,
Sight and limbs.

Remembering Me every day and living under My protection.

And he who lives as My ward.

This is the eight-fold mark of devotion. The birth does not matter in the presence of this, since the aim of birth is to lead to this *bhakti*. This is said earlier and admitted by Rāmānuja. This verse is culled out from the commentary on the 85th *Sūtra* of the work *Ācārya Hrdaya*—a work of the 14th Century scholar which is an evolution of the teachings of the *Drāviḍa-Vedānta* from the philosophic point of view, dealing with the conduct of life in society. Birth and breeding apart, if we find in any person the features mentioned in this verse, he is recommended to be regarded on a par with the Lord Himself. The verse is both our hope and despair, for, the status of esteem is not denied to any one, but to work for the status is beyond normal means in a world of conflicting interests. The factors present in a person which command universal adoration, irrespective of the limitations introduced by the birth factor are the following—

Men are treated as belonging to an exclusive class of *Mleechas* if birth or *jati* (caste) is the only basis for dignity or respect as a member of the society.

The spirit behind this attitude is that the privilege to move towards perfection is universal and the right to deny such privilege does not belong even to a single being, however great he may be. This is the doctrine of accommodation not involving adjustment.

Non-adjustment and Accommodation

Constitutionally in the eye of the *Veda*, every functionary is a *Mleecha* (renegade)—a person who fails to conform strictly to the code of conduct. It is in this context the doctrine of mercy on the part of the saviour comes to be recognised. The function of grace is to assist in overcoming the abnormal trend in life based on psychological promptings. As a substitute for punishment, grace operates to link the psychological course with the logical and it is this blend of psychological impulse that assures man true freedom in life. The aim of all is not to be the untouchable of the Lord. In this light it would be an unpardonable crime to be an untouchable personally in spirit and apply the doctrine of

untouchability to another member of society. Therefore, eradication of untouchability will not be a reality unless the partners in apartheid jointly realise the basic factor of untouchability. This doctrine is revealed in the Superb expression of Kūrēsa—the great disciple of Rāmānuja in one of his *Stotras*.¹⁶

“*Parasparā-nica-bhāvāṭṭ
mad deśi-kaiṭṭ
parijanaṭṭ tava sangasīya*”.

May I be in the company of your devotee, My leaders in life who behave towards each other in humility.

Every member entertains that he is an untouchable. With this attitude of humility and the realization of the position of the self in relation to the Supreme Spirit, the great men come to lead us and they are therefore the *ācāryas* or guides in society and they are all without exception engaged in ceaseless service to the Lord. Kūrēsa prays that he might be admitted to the group of such persons. The doctrine does not preach the principle of exclusion. On the other hand, the true implication is to check aggression through practice. Aggression is discouraged not only for others who want to be aggressors, but also for the person who discourages aggression. It is in this sense that Rāmānuja preferred the good company that he enjoyed in life.

In the *Tiru-k-Kulattār* context of treatment, Rāmānuja observes another point which escapes the attention of an alert mind. An instinct insignificant in itself in a particular set-up is charged with a spirit of powerful glory which it derives from the divine influence. What happened actually was that by chance and by instinct the natives of the forest (*gṛijanas*) (the term *pañchama* may not be exclusively applicable to this batch cleared the path and helped Rāmānuja to use this path when he discovered his deity. This little instinct got enriched in value in the outlook of Rāmānuja. An instinct on the part of Śrī or *Tiru* to prepare the path for mankind is to move from grief to bliss. This is the functional status recognised and the pride of the *Tiru-k-Kulattār* is that they have a chance or opportunity of realising the best worth of their habits. Thanks to the association of Rāmānuja, the doctrine here again is that all that is needed for man is purification, rising above misconception and not to tarnish his own image by indulging in limitations or deserting his native habits, the phrase occurring in the Bhagavad-gīta—

"Svesve karmaṇi abhirataḥ" devoted to natural work, may be remembered to serve as the guiding star in life. The practice of this principle has been recorded in the *Guruparamparāprabhavam*—a treatise on the life of the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* mainly from the spiritual point of view.¹⁷

*"Vipraku gōtra, sūtra, charaṇa kūtasther
parāśara parāśrya, bodhāyanadīgal
prapanna jana kūṭastha, parāñkuśa
parakāla yatīśvarādīgal."*¹⁸

As regards the twice born, the forerunners of the family, the clan and sect are respectively parāśara, pāraśarya and bodhāyana. As regards the prapanna, the, Śrīvaiṣṇavas, the forerunners are respectively—Parāñkuśa, Parakāla and Yatiśvara Rāmānuja.

The caste-bound section, that is the brahmin, is guided by parāśara, Vyasa and Bodhāyana. The spirit-bound section without restriction follows the lead of Parāñkuśa, Parakāla and finally Rāmānuja. *Tirukhulam* belongs to the latter group. The first section refers to the material aspect of life in the progressive direction, the second relates to the cultural aspect of life to be preserved. Material progress is a move from imperfection to perfection, progressive refinement in life. The second is retention continuum. Social activity is the result of qualitative change as is commonly understood. But, according to Rāmānuja, is an orderly life without a qualitative change in different phases. Rāmānuja's socialism is to regulate and not to introduce new from. From his point of view Rāmānuja is a socialist. While observing the rules and regulations under the caste system which have been neither ignored nor under-valued, a point to be remembered is that the polish of the system should not be allowed to fade.

The Śattadārs

In this connection it would not be out of place to mention the special status of a group of *Vaiṣṇavaites* who chose to be the disciples of Rāmānuja and confined themselves to functions connected with the temple and the devotees; they were called, it is maintained in tradition, *Śattāda Śrīvaiṣṇavas*. The term *Śattāda* is interpreted in different ways from the caste point of view, to which Rāmānuja does not attach too much importance

except as a mark of class discipline. The *Śattadārs* are those who do not wear the sacred thread which entitles them to study the *Vedas* and the *Vedānta* as the *traiyavṛtikas* are entitled to do. On the other hand, they are not denied the fruits of *Vedic* study, for they are given the initiation through what is known as *Pañchasamskāra* and introduced to the study of the *Drāvida-Vedānta* which does not insist on the wearing of the sacred thread as a precondition to the study of the *Veda*, in the same way in which the *traiyavṛtikas* are not permitted to study the *Drāvida-Vedānta* unless they accept initially the *Pañchasamskāras*. The word *Sattāda* may therefore be applied to both the communities who specialise separately in the two *Vedāntas*. The person who does not wear the sacred thread is a *Śattāda*, not wearing, from the point of view of Sanskrit *Veda*. In a similar vein, the men wearing the sacred thread not qualified to study the *Drāvida Veda* is also a *Śattāda Brahmana*. The true *Śrīvaiṣṇava* who can hold the office of an *ācārya*; therefore, is one who has access to both the branches of *Vedānta*—Sanskrit and *Drāvida*. Rāmānuja recognised the rank and status of a community named *Śattadārs*. *Śattada*, the term is used to distinguish from the term *Śattina*. *Śattina* means wearing the sacred thread and entitled to study and follow the *Vedas*. *Śattada* refers to a sect which is denied the above privilege.¹⁹ It includes all the non-brahmins. Among them a group emerged accepting the view and way of life of the *Śrīvaiṣṇava*. Even among the group of *Sattinabrahmins* a few come under the category of *Śrīvaiṣṇavas*. The *Sattada Śrīvaiṣṇava* include the non-brahmins in the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* fold.

Not all the non-brahmin *Śrīvaiṣṇavas* are technically *Śattadārs*. They must have constituted a small group. They must have been forward among the non-brahmins group from very early times. They must have preferred a status for themselves between the brahmins and the non-brahmins as commonly understood, on account of their vocational inclinations, namely, the art of healing, the art of decoration and a few manual performances of the socio-religious order.

The distinction maintained by this group as an element between the brahmin and the non-brahmin in the accepted sense has created a problem of its status at the time of origin. The *Śattadārs* claimed on the basis of *Agnipurāṇa* that they were brahmins, but they neglected the sacred thread and the study of the *Vedas* for a long time.²⁰ They would, therefore, accept a

status higher than a non-brahmin. Attempts are also afoot to revive the old habits of brahminism and to reestablish their brahminism. The period of brahminic lapse must have been over many centuries. During the time of Rāmānuja, they remained *Śattada Śrīvaiṣṇavas*. They were not anxious to reclaim brahminism in preference to Śrīvaiṣṇavism which they considered most precious and permanent.

The present age finds a very small percentage of brahmins continuing in form and spirit the *Vedic* practice. Reasons are not difficult to find. The strains and stresses to which the land of the *Vedic* seers was subjected to by the invasions and heretic protestations denied safety to the brahmin creed. Along the passage of time, the brahminism has been gradually losing its vigour and vitality. Yet the name and the aim have a fascination for mankind which has ceaselessly started to attack the contemporary representative as an intermediary.

Rāmānuja insisted on the permanent value of *Śrīvaiṣṇavism*—a characteristic which covers the whole universe. But brahminism and non-brahminism confined to modes of approach were held secondary in importance. He, therefore, did not insist on the *Śattadars* to wear the brahmin badge. The practice is running as it existed during the time of Rāmānuja.

Tolerance, dignity of status, functional distinction, non-encroachment, confidence in happy life was promised by Rāmānuja to them and finally wiping out the element of ego, the root of all social evil, they were given posts conforming to their power of functioning. Rāmānuja was interested in functional ability.

Origin and Early Habitation

The *Śattada Śrīvaiṣṇava* community is a community existing from the origin of the human race. It is generally believed that they had their origin in Tamil Nadu²¹, they also stayed in Andhra. The *Śattadars* who chose to be under the influence of Rāmānuja were called the inhabitants of Venkaṭapura—the locality named after the presiding deity Śrī Venkaṭésvara²². Their casts originated from those who served in vaiṣṇavaite temples. They migrated to different places inhabited by the *vaiṣṇavas*. They are largely inhabited in Tamil Nadu, Āndhra and Karnāṭaka and speak the respective regional languages—Tamil, Telugu and Kannada. In the region of Mēlukōṭe the *Śattadars* built a village and identified themselves as *Beṭhamangal Śattadars*, they also migrated to Orissa, west Bengal

and Madhya Pradesh. Their population in all is approximately fifteen lakhs all over India²³.

We come across different groups in this community *Śrīnadam-tāngis*, who participated in processions and decorations of the deity and the bearers of the palanquin in which the deity is seated; they are named as *Toḷukku-Intiyan* (the deity borne on the shoulder produces a sense of thrill). In addition to these, there emerged another batch which was not interested in the land of birth or adoption, but which welcomed the functional dignity associated with the clan. They came to be designated as the *Sātvika Śrīvaiṣṇava*. The word *Sātvika* emphasises the power of *Śatvaguna* of pure knowledge.

Their mother tongue is Tamil, but they speak Telugu and Kannada also because of their migration to Āndhra and Karnāṭaka. The people living in southern most parts of Tamil Nādu speak Tamil. They are called *Kovithuraiyar*.

The endogamous sub-divisions of this caste are—*Ekakshari*, *Chaturakshari*, *Asthakshari* and *Kulāsekara*; there is also a group known as *Chinnavaishnavas*.²⁴ In the Madras Census Report of 1901, they are summed up as being a Telugu caste of temple servants supposed to have come into existence during the time of Vaisnavite reformer Rāmānuja.²⁵ *Eka*—one, *akshari*—syllable, hope to get salvation by reciting the one mystic syllable, *om*, while the *Chaturākshari* believe in the religious efficacy of the four syllables of Rāmānuja. The *Asthakshari* hold that the recitation of eight syllables—*om—na—mo—nārā—yaṇaya—om*. Salvation to Nārāyaṇa will ensure them external bliss and the Kulāsekaras claim to be descendants of the *vaiṣṇava* saint Kulāsekara Āḷvār. All these Śattadārs their sub-divisions closely imitate the *Tengalai vaiṣṇava* brahmans and are strictly the followers of Rāmānuja. The *Sattadārs* are described in the census report of 1871 as religious mendicants, who live on begging alms, priests of inferior temples, priests of *Śūdra* castes, and have recruited their number by the admission into their fold of individuals who have been excommunicated from higher castes²⁶.

Mysore Census Report of 1891 mentions that *Sattadārs* are styled as *Khadrivaiṣnavas*, *Śattadaval*, *Chātali Kuleśekhara* and *Samerava*, these names might have irritated them and they took pains to cast them off and enrolled themselves as *Prapanna Vaiṣnavas*, Nambi, Venkaṭapūva *Vaiṣnavas* and so on. They hated the idea of being tabulated as *Śūdras*. They also called themselves as *Dāsanambis*, *Natāchāramuri* and so on²⁷. They are at Śrīvilliputtur in Tinnevely district.

They are Rāmānuja *Vaiṣṇavas* of *Tenkalai* persuasion. Their *gurus* are known as *Paravasudēva*. They have *Sadacharulu*, who act as their agents and brand their shoulders with the *Vaiṣṇavaite* emblems, the *San̥kha* and *Chakra* and initiate them into the *Vaiṣṇava* religion by whispering into their ears the word Rāmānuja.

In Tamil Nādu, the people of this caste lived mostly in villages until recently.

Inspired Privilege

The religious fervour which distinguished the *Śattadārs* as the exclusively privileged to carry the palanquin on their shoulders on occasion of processions in which the deity is kept moving is clearly traceable to the function of Hanumān recognised as an authority on linguistics (*Navavyakarna Paṇḍita*). Hanumān enjoyed the privilege of carrying on his shoulders both Rāma and Lakshmaṇa. It was his exclusive privilege to bring the life-saving herbs without which the army would not recover from the effects of poison. Precisely with this temperament the *Śattadārs* have been exercising under permission of *ācārya*, the exclusive privilege of being the personal *archakas* or worshippers of Hanumān.

The sanctity of the expression *Śrīpadam tāngi*—the moving foot rest of the divine is traceable to Hanuman who is known among *Śrīvaiṣṇavas* as *Śrīya tīrvadi*. Hence it would be clear here that caste and the *āśrama* of organic life are not regarded as an exclusive need to a life in its march to perfection. Consequently regard or aversion for any caste as such does not arise nor does it deserve special consideration.

The interest in the medical field is also traceable to the part played by Hanumān in the epics²⁸. *Śattadārs* are experts in testing medical worth and value of herbs, fruits and flowers alike. Sandal paste was extensively used as an external paste to ward off unhygienic effects of nature. Hence the group on that account was accorded a status next to the philosophers who devoted themselves to maintaining spiritual health.

Service to Rāmānuja

To commemorate the event of Rāmānuja's arrival at Mēlukōṭe on the two occasions of his moving away from Śrīrangam westwards for the first time and again on the occasion of his return from Delbi bringing with him the iconic figure of the deity who was endearingly addressed as *Sēlvapiḷlai*—the child of my fortune, his followers,

particularly Śattadārs, prepared a floral crown and offered it for wearing to Rāmānuja on the sixth day of the birth-day celebration of the ācārya celebrated over a period of ten days. Since the ācārya left behind his ascetic robes and took in exchange the white robes for period, that particular day in the celebration of which the Śattadārs played a prominent role is described as 'Delhi Uttavam' or 'Vellaiṣattu-p-paḍi'—which is wearing the white robes. This was the privilege of the Śattadārs and the function was continued without a break till very recently. Modern pulls and pressures from the secular side led to the stoppage of the peculiar privilege of the Śattadārs who migrated to different places unable to maintain the disciplined life of welcoming economic discomfort. Even today at Mēlukoṭe a floral crown is brought to the temple on that particular day and it is put on the head of Kuréṣa, the alter ego of Rāmānuja. On that occasion the group of Śattadārs is singled out for special honour in the assembly. This is recorded in the *Temple Manual*.

Art Development

Śattadārs are generally known for their talents. They are well-versed in the field of astrology, medicine, music, dance and in the art of decoration. Both men and women are experts in fine arts. They are immersed in *Bhagavat-bhakti* and singing in praise of Almighty and in *bajana* and *Kalakshepams* (discourse). Side by side with the art of decoration, the art of dancing or *Abhinaya* was developed which found its source in religion. Even as the image of the deity conveyed the intent of philosophic life in the various postures, the purpose of the dance was also to show to the eye of the recipient the significance of philosophic life in the presence of the deity by employing various moves and postures. The central idea was one and the same to reveal the nature and purpose of life in all possible ways for the benefit of people of varying capacities to grasp the value of life. This was taken as a privilege by the ladies. Even long before Rāmānuja, the ācāryas who preceded him specialised in the art of religious *abhinaya* before the deity. They selected men of outstanding ability in the field of music and dancing and they developed the art of conveying the philosophy of life expounded in the *Drāviḍa-vedānta* in the presence of the deity. They introduced what may be known as *audio-visual* system of communication. This was confined to the experts in the *Ubhayavedānta* and that system has been continued to this day by the specialists who have been known as *Ariyars* (the Chief).

This talent of *Śattadārs* was recognised and utilised by Rāmānuja. They were allotted duties big and small. Those who dwell in villages were mostly *archakas* and in *divyadēśas* (Holy Places) like Śrīrangam and other eminent *Śrīvaiṣṇava* temples they had been allotted duties and were given due temple honours. They led a simple and scholarly life and were respected and rewarded by the public. Their daily routine was to seek alms. They lived on *Unchavṛṭhi* (alms)²⁰.

The contribution of the Śattadars

Profession and Occupation—Coming to the part played by the *Sattadārs* in society, they contributed their talents by taking up different kinds of professions and occupations which served the society and as their livelihood. They were well-versed in the field of medicine. The genius of testing the medical worth and value of herbs, fruits, flowers, alike, made them take up the profession of Ayurvedic doctors²⁰. Some of them took up cottage industries like making cot tapes false plaits, *Kumkum*, *Nāmam* fan and alike. They were well-versed in the science of astrology. They engaged themselves in making *Vāhanas* (vehicle), drawing divine pictures, decorated wedding pandals. During the time of Rāmānuja they held many posts in temples at Śrīrangam, Tirupati, Thirukottiyur, Mélukōṭe, Kāñcīpuram and alike and were priests in the Hanumān temple and were reliable confidants of Rāmānuja and served him and implemented his reforms faithfully. They earned name in society by helping society in all manners. They had even sacrificed their lives in propagating Vaiṣṇavism and protecting temples and their properties from enemies from within and without. They prepared sandal paste which was used as an external paste to ward off unhygienic effects of nature. Flowers were used to develop the sense of art in the preparation of garlands, they toiled in the garden and made garlands to offer it for their Lord. They worked in *Nandavanams*, participated in temple processions and decorated the deity. They were the *Palanquine*, bearers. The women-folk also engaged themselves in the task of keeping the entire area of the temple clean and attractive. They wrote pictures on the floor representing the art scenes. The principal occupations of the *śattadārs* are making garlands, carrying torches during the God's procession and participating in the procession of the deity. They also make umbrellas, flower baskets and boxes of palmgr leaves and prepare the sacred bolls of white clay for making the *Vaiṣṇavite* Sectarian

mark and saffran powder. They sell turmeric, colour powders, some acted as priests to *Baliṅas* and *Komaṅṅe* at whose death ceremonies, the presence of the *Sattadārs* is essential. They supply flowers and *tulasi* (*basil*) leaves for worship and watch the gate of the temple during the night and they also develop the art of *abhinaya* (pose) in the presence of the deity. They also engage in business and agriculture.

Dress, Custom and Habit

The *Sattadārs* have their heads completely and tie their lower cloth, put *nāmam* on their forehead, wear *tulasi*—(*basil*) *māla* (garland). The *Sattadār* mendicants can be recognised by the flat gourd-shaped brass pot and palm leaf which they carry. The *Sattadār* women dress just like *Vaiṣṇava* brahmin women.

In the former days, they observed a festival called *Ravikāla Uthavam* which now goes by the name of *Gandapadi Uthsavam* (Sandal powder). The custom of *Menarikem*, according to which a man marries his maternal uncle's daughter is observed.⁸¹ The marriage of the widows is not allowed. They are Rāmānuja *Vaiṣṇava*s of *Tenkalai* persuasion. They undergo the branding ceremony (*Samāśṛyaṇa*) of the *Vaiṣṇavite* symbols by their *ācāryas*. They perform the last rites of the *Sūdras* and the *Komaṅṅis*. They live near the temple and recite Tamil devotional hymns on equal basis with the brahman functionaries.⁸²

Regarding their habits, the consumption of alcoholic liquor and animal food is strictly prohibited. Some of them bury dead and others burn.

Their usual agnomen is *Aiyar*, *Dāsa-Nambis*, *Muthalis*—a term denoting respect in *Vaiṣṇavite* terminology. There is mention about *Śattada Mudalis*, such as Śrīkulaśekaraperumal, Pattrapiran, Dāsar, Pillainranga Villidāsar, Rāmānuja Velaikkatar, Rāmānuja's army called *Velaikkarapadi* consisted entirely of *Sattadārs*.⁸³

Sattadārs family names have been coined in such a way as to indicate the places where they lived or from where they migrated. They are—Tirupathi *Valu*, Sonjjar, Redlapillar, Nellorer, Tiru-k-Kovillar, Śrīvilliputhoorar, Kumbakonathar and alike.⁸⁴ Some of the names arising out of the avocations they pursued are—*Kovilar*, *Poovular*, *Sannanthar* and alike.

Some were called after the titles they received due to their special traits or performances—*Aravanuthevar*, *Pillalu*, *Kanthadaikulam*, *Prapanna Vaiṣṇava*, *Satvika Vaiṣṇava*, *Kulaśekara Vaiṣṇava*, *Rāmānuja*

Vaiṣṇava.³⁵ Rāmānuja elevated this section of a community to a place of honour in the society by imposing on them the Śrīvaiṣṇava culture. His injunctions to his disciples and society was that they should guard themselves against pride of caste, wealth and knowledge. He struggled hard to emphasise the need for social cohesion humanitarian solidarity. He preached and practised humanism and practised humanism and love among the fellow beings. The *Sattadārs* served him and implemented his reforms faithfully. Immensely pleased with the sincere and devoted work of these people. Rāmānuja blessed them and admitted them to *Śrīvaiṣṇava* fold. He visualised the volution of a society without hierarchy.³⁶

*"Toṇḍa-k-Kulattil uḷḷir vandu
aḍi taḷudu..... paṇḍai-k-kulattai
tavirndu pallāṇḍu enmine"*.³⁷

You people belonging to the group of the devotees do come and worship at the source, give up the habit of the former or the previous environment and pray for the preservation of that.

He gave importance to functional recognition and service. During his time they were held in high esteem. Rāmānuja established a code to organise the temple affairs which covered the aspects of ritual and management. The non-brahmins were permitted to take up service in temple which not only provided employment, but also induced service motto of which Rāmānuja was very particular. Many of the key posts such as temple accountant, manager, was given to the member of the *Sūdra* agricultural community—the *Vellalas*. The task of offering coconut to the deity was given to a member of the weaver community. The *Sattadārs* were permitted to take up service in the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* temples. There was a group of *Sūdra* house holders permanently attached to the temple service. The ritual roles of them were maintained according to the rules prescribed in the code of Rāmānuja. This reflects the apparent liberalism of Rāmānuja in his capacity as sect organiser and leader. In the context of the ritual, various classes of persons were permitted to participate provided they had faith in the ritual. *Sattadārs* were given a legitimate place and honour in the temple and society³⁸. As a part of the scheme of the socio-economic and religious service, Rāmānuja admitted *Sattadārs* into his fold and they were given a recognition in the society.

Tirupathi temple reached its pinnacle of glory under the vijayanagara emperors. The rise of the temple was based on its ancient sacred character in part, on a traditional relationship with Rāmānuja Krishnadévarāya, Sālva Narashima and others supported it by extending royal patronage. Numerous references are found in inscriptions of granting substantial wealth to the temple, and also for the appointment of the *Śattadārs* in the temple service.

Position and status of women in the Śrīvaiṣṇava Society

Improvement in the status of women in the social and religious walks of life, was another notable contribution of the Śrīvaiṣṇava society. In the society of orthodox traditions women were not generally endowed with social status of rights and privileges in the modern sense. They enjoyed enough freedom in the family and were respected in the society. However, there did not exist public or private institutions to impart general education to and women were not allowed to participate in religious discussions on par with men in public. But it has been rectified by Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition; there are women saints such as Andal and the existence of a large group of saintly women devotees of Rāmānuja we find stray references to women's participation. Andal—wife of Kuréśa—disciple of Rāmānuja participated in the open discussion along with men⁸⁹ on the role of sanctity in life. This reveals that Rāmānuja recognised merit in women.

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4. Nāyanār : *Ācārya Hrdaya*, IV—5, Commentary on the expression 'Viṣa-vṛkṣa phalagal'.
5. Yāmunācharya, M. : *Rāmānuja's Teachings in His Own Words*, P. 31.
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CHAPTER VII

Rāmanuja—The Culture-Based Socialist

Religion Basic to a Synthetic Perception—The Social Status of Different Functions Vital to Hold Society Together—Compassion as the Basis to Hold Society Together—The Procedure Adopted to Spread the Above Culture Among the Masses—Intellectuals and their Contributions.

Religion and Ritual are respectively knowledge and behaviour on the part of an individual who is after maintaining the very best in life. They constitute the cultural backbone of individual life in all its aspects. It is the acquisition of the individual. It is to spread his individual acquisition among the masses that intellectuals are introduced into society. This is cultural socialism. It is in this context the institution of temples and worship in the temples become significant. The role of Rāmanuja in propagating cultural socialism is discussed.

Religion basic to Synthetic Perception

Religion as a part of experience has provided for temple worship. Our activity is conditioned by circumstances, helpful and hostile. The persistent ambition is to neutralise hostile forces, if they could not be converted into helpful forces. By instinct a Super-power is approached to achieve the ambition with firm faith that it is both potent and compassionate, *Kāruṇika* and *Sarveśvara*. Steady attachment to this source—power, commonly remembered as God, is religion. In other words, firm faith in this entity of Mercy-Power and allegiance to it in all walks of life is the distinguishing mark of religion which otherwise is a secular life with or without purpose. Any activity which is linked to Religion is a ritual. The temple is the best suited centre to experience religious life and to perform ritual acts. Ritual is also religious because it closely follows the spirit of religion. The significance of religion and ritual is the awareness that without a Super Power to assist, human progress is

not possible. Human activity which is secular in character by itself may not be a potent instrument to realise the ambition of life. Hence associating the Super-human power in some form or the other in the performance of the act comes to be known as ritual. When the human and Super-human forces are associated, the relative contribution of the two forces in combination varies depending upon the mental power of the agent who embarks on a procedure to gain his point in life.

The Social Status of different functions Vital to Hold Society Together

Being convinced that without the Super Power, life becomes meaningless and realising also the strong inclination towards secular attractions in life and following the time honoured tradition, Rāmānuja emphasised the importance of developing a temperament which would not eschew the spiritual side of life.¹ This idea is emphasised in the *Vedānta Sūtra* which discusses the source of wish-fulfilment.

*"Phalam atah upa-pattaḥ
Parasmāt Brahmaṇa eva
Karamabhiḥ upāsanenu ca ārādhitat
bhōgāpavarga—rūpam phalam siddhyati"*.

Benefits, earthly or heavenly, can be reaped only by winning the grace of God through prayer or ritual performance.

Even in religious life where the spiritual aspect of life prevails over other aspects touching the body and the mind, men are not called upon to give up their functional style.

*"Sarvāṇi Kāmyāni api Karmāni
.....mayi Sanyāsta-kartṛtvādikaḥ
Kurvānaḥ mat—prasādat.....
avikalam prapoti"*².

Performing every kind of activity even though that be Kāmya, with a narrow end, in view, disassociating from the feelings of personal agency, performance and result, the person only by my grace obtains, the true reward in full.

What is of special significance in the temple is that every one is regarded as entitled to equal status of treatment. The contributions that different types of people make to the temple are all treated as of equal value. With this equality recognized and admitted and

preserved, the need never arises for one to adopt an alien role in service.

*"Yathodtte Karmani abhirato naraḥ
Siddhim vindati"*³.

Devotion to the duty assigned to a person leads him to perfection.

Thus the *archak* or the actual worshipper of the image will not be involved in any other form of service ; even the *Paricharaka* (servant) and the Board or the *Pathaka* (Reader). There are other categories—the lamp bearers, the flutist, the florist and a host of others. The duty and the atmosphere of the temple would serve to preserve the spirit of divine presence and devotion revealed in service. It would serve as a background for healthy conduct in society. This spirit becomes a habit. The habit becomes precious and pleasant with the knowledge of life in its essence derived through learning from books and observing the habits of the wise.

*Kūdi irundu kuḷirndu"*⁴

Please get together, keep together and feel comfortable.

This is the basis for the doctrine of co-operation. To keep together happily. This attitude and walk of life [could not be missed by any one. This is basic to life. Variations there may be in the application of this principle. Those variations regarded as cult. Rāmānuja recognizes the claim of life also in religion and he does not plead for the substitution of one cult for another by indefensible means, lest such a trend be regarded as a form of external force.

*"Mṛalaiyār Śeyvanagaḷ veṇḍavane"*⁵.

We prefer the performances of the ancients.

The temple, therefore, is an institution serving the cause of an important aspect of life in which appear as prominent the following—a respectful outlook, while-hearted contribution, personal humility, co-operation and a sense of contentment and satisfaction, besides the keen desire to keep these tendencies alive and active. The temple serves as the symbol of a society where vice does not rule and want is not aggravated, duty is not neglected and encroachment allowed. This is the social significance of life in the temple. No distinction is made between the saint and the savage, the *Sanyāstin* and the serf. The rich and the poor, the familiar and the unfamiliar, man and woman, the worker and the visitor in the temple. If this act is practiced in society, it will also be a temple. The spirit of

the temple re-lived in society, makes for heavenly life, but the converse is not a guarantee. If in the temple, the non-temple way of life is introduced, it becomes the centre of strife and pollution and loses its claim to be a temple. Festivals serve as occasions for the gathering of people in large number to experience the joy in a society that is well organised. This refines human mind. Commenting on the verse—

“*Yetuanya—devatā—bhaktāḥ*”⁶.

Those who are the devotees of outsiders.

Rāmānuja observes—

“*Sarvasya mat—śarīratyā madāt makatvena
Vastuto mam eva yajñate*”⁷.

Actually every thing is inhabited by me. Hence any worship—if it be genuine—is worship of Me.

Cf. “*Avar avar Itaiya var kuṭaivilar*”⁸.

The deities recognised are not in any way defective.

Compassion as the basis to Hold Society Together

The old rituals of Hinduism confined to the higher castes are replaced by the *Vaiṣṇava* rituals, such as the *Pañcasamskara* of the *Bhāgavata* tradition, prescribed for all irrespective of castes and sects. The sacrificial worship of the twice-born comes to be replaced by image worship opened to all castes. The deity incarnate in the image is held to be the highest form of God-head.

Temple worship comes to the forefront. The entire community sustains the temple and participates in its ceremonial functions. Vedānta Deśika quotes from an ancient text *Varahapurāṇa*—that the observance of untouchability in the temple is an heinous sin⁹. This work epitomises the life of a *Śrīvaiṣṇava* as practised by Rāmānuja and the value of this life is the wiping out of hierarchy in society on baseless convention.

The conventional caste distinctions are said to be obliterated among the devotees of Viṣṇu. The *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇa* regards the enquiry about the caste of a devotee as equivalent to suspicion about one's mother's chastity. To look upon the image of Viṣṇu as merely a physical object is equally a mark of debasing outlook. In an attempt to elucidate the stand adopted by Rāmānuja, following the clue available in the *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇa*. Vedānta Deśika the follower of Rāmānuja, has discussed this whole question in his *Rahasyatraya* in the chapter called ‘*Prabhava Vyavasthādhikāra*.’

While this doctrine conduces to social integration among the devotees, what should be a Vaisnava's attitude towards those who fall outside the bounds of the *Vaiṣṇavas*. The criterion of true *Vaiṣṇavism* is enunciated by Hanjiyar as quoted to *Idu*—a compassion to all beings that suffer without any enquiry regarding their merits. Compassion, truly universal, is regarded as the fundamental mark of a *Vaiṣṇava*. The pathways to God formulated in the older Hinduism as *Karma*, *Jñāna* and *Bhakti* are discarded in favour of *prapatti* which later is held to be capable of universal adoption unlike the superseded pathways. Though the *Vedānta Sūtras* considered the *Sūdras* as unfit for *Upniṣadic* meditations, in the entire history of *Srīvaiṣṇavism* there is a progressive attempt to nullify this restriction. A new system of initiation comes into vogue named *Pañcasamskāra* which practically eclipses and even sets aside the *Vedic* initiation into the *Gāyatri* of the three upper castes. A trinity of devotional formulas or *mantras* is introduced and it is set above the *Vedic mantras*. It is called *Rahasyatraya*. It is open to all irrespective of castes and sects.

The Procedure adopted to spread the above Culture among the Masses

Rāmānuja Visualised the need to provide an opportunity to the fellow beings to cling to the life of supreme culture. He would not employ the culture of force as that would always result in rebellion. External force is no solution to salvation. He, therefore, preferred the course of creating a proper background which would help the fellow beings to see life for themselves. With this in mind he selected the competent among his followers to engage themselves in providing such an opportunity. They were intellectuals, the *ācārya puruṣas*, and other persons. Some of them wrote works pertaining to the true nature of life in their terse works. Others wrote popular treatises in the form of handbooks. Some others met the people in society, mixed with them and expounded the scheme of life to them. To this category, devoted to the spread of culture as visualised by Rāmānuja, belong the great intellectuals. The works of some of them which are regarded as classical and easy to grasp are referred to in the following section.

Intellectuals and their Contribution

Yādevaprakāśa, formerly the *guru* of Rāmānuja, entered his fold under the name of Govinda Muni. He wrote a work on the discipline which governs the life of a *Sanyāsin*—*Yatidharma Samuccaya*.

A material cousin of Rāmānuja by name Govinda became a *Sanyāsin* and spent his life time as Rāmānuja's disciple. He was a pastmaster in the art of *abhinaya* (dance), the purpose of which was communication of religious thought and feelings through pose and posture. There was another great scholar by name Dēvarāja Muni also called as Varada Muni. For the first time during the time of Rāmānuja, this new incumbent wrote two books of classical value in Tamil dealing with the nature of the Supreme Being and its protective power. The works bear the names—*Jñanasāra* and *Prameyasāra*¹⁰.

“*Rāmānujārya as śiṣyam*
Veda-śāstra-artha-sampadam
Caturtha-āśrama-sampanmam
Dēvarāja munim bhaje”.

The devoted disciple of Rāmānuja whose wealth is his command over *Vedic* thought and who has entered upon the fourth stage of life (*Sanyāsa*) that sage Dēvarāja Muni by name, I adore.

Another notable figure by name, Kurukēśa, the son of Śrī Śaila-pūrṇa of Tirupati wrote in Sanskrit-cum-Tamil language (in Manipravāla) the first commentary on the Tiruvāimoli—the Tamil counter-part of the *Chandogya Upaniṣad*. It bears the name in Tamil *Arayirap-paḍi*. Kūrēśa, the alter-ego as already noted, presented the system of Rāmānuja's thought in recitational form in Sanskrit. His works are five in number and the entire work is named *Pañcastava*. This form of presenting philosophy is in imitation of Yāmūnācārya's style as revealed in his work *Stotra Ratna*. This form of presentation is to make the philosophy familiar to the masses. It differs in style from the *Bhāṣyas* or treatises by omitting the terse technology employed in the application of thought principles. His son Parasarabhaṭṭa like his father expounded the system in two great works—*Srirangarāja Stava* and *Sriṅgaratna Kośa*. The latter describing the nature and function of Śrī. Besides he wrote a commentary on the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* stated to be the final message of Bhīma to Yudhiṣṭhira who was in quest for lasting peace of mind—*mokṣa*. This *Sahasranāma* is a summary of the course to be followed in life as mentioned in the *Bhagavad-gīta* by the Supreme incarnate. Both the works—the *Sahasranāma* and *Bhagavad-gīta* constitute the central teaching of the *Mahābhārata*, a book discussing comprehensively methods leading to happiness. Following the methods adopted by Dēvarājamuni, Pārāsarabhaṭṭa

wrote a work called *Aṣṭaśloki*. It contains the essence of the philosophy of Rāmānuja. Another scholar by name Viṣṇuchitta joined the fold of Rāmānuja serving as the disciple of Kurukēśa and wrote a commentary on the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* of Parāśara which was looked upon as the best of the eighteen *Purāṇas* for its clarity and objectivity. The said scholar could not be the direct disciple of Rāmānuja, for he was very much younger in age. The three scholars namely—Kurukēśa, Viṣṇuchitta and Parāśarabhatta directed their energies to recording the tradition presented in the three works of *Drāvida Veda*, *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and the *Sahasranāma*, the quintessence of the teaching of *Mahābhārata*. To this group a great *Paṇḍit* by name Garuḍavāhna found admission. Besides being an expert in medicine, he chose to present in order the list of the celebrated *ācāryas* who preceded Rāmānuja. This book in Sanskrit is the first *Guruparamparā* dealing with the great torch-bearers of the *Viśiṣṭha-dvaita* culture ending with Rāmānuja. The work is known as *Dīvyasūtrīcaritām*. Another scholar of importance who dedicated his life solely to the service of the *ācārya* was one Āndhrapūrṇa, probably a person from Āndhra region. He was also known as Vaḍuganambi, perhaps on the score of his remaining throughout life a bachelor. *Vaḍuga* is *Vaṭu* which in Sanskrit means a bachelor. His outlook on life was that of a disciplined life under the intrinsic influence of existence and its purpose. Behaviour would lead to the beaming knowledge perhaps with greater ease. It is comparable to the practical approach to knowledge. He too wrote the biography of Ramanuja in Sanskrit under the caption *Yatirāja Vatbhavam*. The chief merit of the work is the power of the Supreme personality of Rāmānuja against which, as the author records, the discipline of indiscipline (i.e., *Kali Prabhāva*) proved ineffective. This reference must be confined to the study of character and outlook of Rāmānuja and not to the circumstances in which the *ācārya* found himself. Man is not the meek victim of environment, but he continues unperturbed irrespective of the environment.

“*Sarvatra utsārya loke vyapagata-vasatim*
Mām akār Śir yatas tvam
Tasmāt samprāpta-kāle matam api
bhavaiaḥ kṣobhayise, sapeyam”¹¹

Having expelled me from the world in every way denying to me homestead to dwell, you have rendered me homeless. Therefore, on a suitable occasion later I vow to disturb the

quality of the thought system you have evolved.

Kali appeared before the *ācārya* and vowed to disturb the stability of the system at a suitable period in the post-Rāmānuja period of thought. The lines suggest that great grit is a necessity to resist the swirling attractions of the world which may not be maintained. Another scholar of repute was Amudanār, who wrote the classical work *Rāmānuja Nūṭṭandādi* in Tamil consisting of 106 verses. In this work he gives a clear picture of the source of strength of Śrī Rāmānuja, his power to overcome obstacles in life successfully and his skill and desire to rescue the less fortunate from the clutches of degrading forces of life. It is called *Prapanna Gāyatri*, because it is the beacon light to the *Prapanna* in the same way in which the *Viṣṇu Gāyatri* is to the *Vedāntin* and the *Vedic-Gāyatri* is to the twice-born. This is the contribution of Amudanār to an appreciation of the full-fledged personality of Rāmānuja. Another great scholar and a distant relative of Rāmānuja was Kiṭāmbi āccan. He was looked upon as a scholar of eminence comparable to the great *Nyaya* philosopher Udayana—the author of a very terse work *Nyaya Kusumāṇaḥ*.

When Rāmānuja was at Mēlukōṭe, he taught his classical work of *Śrī Bhāṣya* to one by name Somayaji Āndān¹². He is said to have written a few works, the chief among them being *Saḍhartha Saṁkṣeṇa*. The work has been missing from a very long time. But a sentence reported to be his composition is quoted in works of later times to indicate that the scholar from Mēlukōṭe also commanded great respect in the eastern region inhabited by Śrī-vaiṣṇava scholars. The sentence is a definition of *Prapatti*. “Bhagavat pravṛitti virodhi svapṛavṛitti niṣṛithih prapattih”.

The doctrine of *Prapatti* is that it is a check on the activity of the supplicant which may be counter to the activity of the Supreme. The definition emphasises the virtue of *Prapatti* in a negative attitude of the behaviour of the supplicant. Scholars who were distributed in various places are also reported to have produced works summarising the philosophy of Rāmānuja. But the main classic that was the subject of study was the *Śrī Bhāṣya*—a comprehensive critical exposition of the system of the *Vedānta* as contained in the *Brahma-Sūtra* of Vyāsa which forms the basis of philosophic thought among all the *Vedāntins*. In addition to this, on the *Vedānta* Rāmānuja wrote two smaller works—*Vedānta-Sāra* and *Vedānta-Dīpa*, one giving the purport of the *Vedānta* and the other

a digest of the *Śrī Bhāṣya*. *Vedārtha Samgraha* is the exposition of the *Upaniṣadic* thought. The *Bhāṣya* on the *Bhagavad-gītā* elucidates the nature and relevance of the different steps adopted on the pragmatic side of life. Separately Rāmānuja has written three works in prose called *Gadyutraya* where stress is laid on the nature and outlook of life of a person who is aware of his enduring link with the source of cosmos. The *Bhāṣya* and the *Gadya* (prose) are regarded as supplementaries to each other, one on the negative side to escape from trials and tribulations and the other on the positive side, retention and realization of the blissful life. On the basis of *Pañcaratra*, the scheme of worship is contained in the *Nityagrantha*—a guide to daily worship by the devotees. It could be seen that during the time of Rāmānuja the necessary framework of thought and action was furnished leaving to the latter generation the task of explanation and elucidation meeting the needs of the times. Following this two leading figures emerged towards the end of the 13th Century Piḷḷailokācārya¹⁸ and his brother Nāyanār (Aḷaḥiya Maṇavāḷa—Perumāḷ Nāyanār) devoted themselves to the development of the positive line of life-spirit. Their chief works being '*Śrīrccana Bhuṣṇa*' and '*Ācārya Hṛdayam*'. Venkatanātha an equally stalwart figure established his leadership dealing with the negative side in which he had to face other *Vedantins*, and non-*Vedanta* philosophers. He was a versatile scholar. He wrote numerous works, but his aim was the presentation of Rāmānuja's thought. In his writings he employed poetic, dramatic, polemic forms. The most significant works were the *Satadushani* and *Tattva Mukta Kalāpa*. An interesting branch is the literature called *Vārtamāla*—this is a collection of the views of various scholars on the subject of philosophy and life communicated to the lay public on relevant occasions. Perhaps this work is similar to the branch of literature known as folklore.

Barring the technical philosophic treatises which are devoted to determining the nature of Reality, all the rest point to the practical benefits flowing from the philosophic source. The last work *Vārtamāla* is an instance of the lay man being benefitted without knowing much of the technique of thought. All these works throw light on the way of life. It is interesting to note here that the split into two schools as in the system of Rāmānuja is found also in the School of Śaṅkara where the earlier known as the *Vivaraṇa* School was followed by another which has come to be known as the *Bhamati* School of *Advaita*.

Maṭhs as distinguished from the institution of *acarya purushas* developed into institutions to continue the tradition of propagating the thought, enlisting disciples and enriching the field of service in different regions.

As has been already mentioned, the positive side of life was taken up for intensive study and the benefits of that study were made available to every one in the fold of *Śrīvaiṣṇava* group irrespective of caste, sex, age or efficiency. The negative study mostly being polemical pointing out the untenability of other systems of thought was confined to the few and that was regarded as optional. But the benefit of that debate was available to the rest in the form of summaries. Thus two classical commentaries came into existence—one in Sanskrit named *Srūta-Prakāśika* and the other in *Maṇipravāḷa* by name *Iḍu Muppattu-Arāyiram* under the leadership of Nambillai, both works belonging to the thirteenth century.

Though the fundamental scripture of Hinduism is *Vedic* what the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* tradition adds to it is *Dīvyaprabhandam*. The Vedic scripture was opened to only three upper castes. But the *Dīvyaprabhandam* is open to all. The former is clothed in the learned language of Sanskrit and the latter is in the spoken language of the masses. Hence, the tradition is called *Ubhaya-Vedānta*. The *Dīvyaprabhandam* is exalted above the Vedic scriptures, as it refers to the basic link which is ignored, denies the very existence of the world. Vedānta Dēśika says in his *Rahasyatraya Sāram*—that many a problem not solved in the Vedic scripture is solved in the *Prabandams*. Ācārya Hṛdaya definitely argues for the superiority of the *Dīvyaprabandham* particularly *Tiruvaimoli* over the Sanskrit scripture.

The axiom on which Rāmānuja based his system of thought is the Body-Mind-Relationship—*Śarīrātma bhāya*. This relationship synthesises experience and presents a picture of unity with extensive variety under control. The mind or *jīva* is described as *cetana*—‘the knowing element’ in experience. It is associated with the *a-cetana*—the mechanical element. The *cetana* finds himself in the world with the *a-cetana* which assists him in the form of body and serves as the medium of experience and the environment, the field of experience. As far as the body is concerned, it is expected to be ever equipped and ready to meet the intentions of the mind. The association between the body and the mind is contingent and occasioned by the exigencies of life, under the law of *Karma*. Therefore, the link is not relished, because it is not permanent and, as is commonly admitted, not an aid to lasting happiness. Emphasis-

ing this aspect, the *Upaniṣada* project the method of controlling the menacing body contact which involves strenuous work in the form of penance and renunciation. The aim is to free she mind once and for all from the clutches of matter. The *Upaniṣada* have enunciated that the Supreme power *Brahman* in the only *atman*, the mind with out a second. The other *atmans* or the individual minds comprising the many under the control of the One are also the body—*Śarīra* of the one and only *Ātman*. Therefore, the knowing factor in the human organism is also the body of the Supreme. This relationship between the one *Ātman* and the Several *ātman*s is also the body-mind relationship. It is permanent and natural. True freedom arises with true knowledge and true knowledge is based on that permanent relationship. The *cetana* is also the body of *Iṣvara*, the Supreme and therefore on a par with the material component which is also the body of *Iṣvara*. It is this awareness that compels the human mind to engage in service, an activity peculiar to the body in reference to its *ātman*. This aspect, the innermost content of thought in the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads* is known as *Rahasya* and this aspect is dealt with in detail in the *Draviḍa-Vedānta*.

What is known as the *Upaniṣadic* message is a direction in the form of renunciation of interests, private and personal. The mandate of the *Rahasya* is the awareness that renunciation is not the aim and end of life. It is something beyond self-abnegation. It is continuous activity with the awareness that the activity pertains to the body of the *atman*, in this Case the *cetana* who is the *Śarīra* of *Iṣvara*. Therefore, socialism is the doctrine according to Rāmānuja which entails upon members of society to serve with a purpose untainted by personal motives, like the parts of an indivisible human organism.

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CHAPTER VIII

Rāmānuja and the Administrative Field

The Administrator Acceptable to Rāmānuja—The Rational Start—Service as Function of Discipline—Administration—The twin Aspects of Service—Style of Administration Provided—Fight Against Corruption—Selection for Service—Initiation—Seasonal counsellors—Preceptor as the Practising Leader—Disciplined Loyalty—Confrontation and Persecution—Facing Peril—Temple Administration—The Institution of Ācārya-Purushas—Culture of the Temples.

The Administrator acceptable to Rāmānuja

Adherence to Truth and Realism : Rāmānuja adopted a course of discipline in life for securing enlightenment. He mixed with many types of leaders in the field. He was not the type to believe that any utterance from a superior is an oracle. Equally he did not believe in the dogma that enlightenment is the result of personal endeavour and pursuit, to the neglect of the thought held by others. The modern trend in the scientific world is to treat every achievement of the past as acquisition for further investigation, but Rāmānuja held the view, following the tradition, that the views held by others in the past could not replace the material which alone has a claim for consideration on the part of man. The views of others may be acceptable or otherwise, but the testing factor of veracity is the extent to which the view reflects the nature of the material. It is only on this basis of strict objectivity and observation under proper perspective that truth can be obtained which would safely guide man throughout life without clouding his thought or restricting his activity.

This achievement is purely subjective and personal. Only when this aim is reached, a direction can be given to promote the welfare of people in society. But the problem is, whether such a discipline and achievement could ever be possible. Society is so varied and

complicated that a steady and unhindered progress is seldom possible in life for any one. But, all the same, on that consideration alone human pursuit after a better status in life cannot be stopped. Pessimism is ruled out of consideration. The empirical approach of employing the doctrine of profiting through error will remain cyclic in character.

The Rational Start

The rationalistic approach of adopting the axiomatic formula of life would be the only effective solution to the preservation of stability in the progress of life. That axiomatic principle is the basic unity of all variety and the consequent discipline and that variety would not appear as pleasant and meaningful unless it is viewed as related to and dependent upon the Source.

Service as Function of Discipline

Rāmānuja found the fulfilment of discipline in the service of society. He did not entertain the earlier notion of leaders of thought that individual salvation was the Supreme aim of existence. He believed in entering society and realising it to be the offshoot of the Source like himself. He tried his best to mix with people of different views and habits and induce them to elevate themselves to a disciplined style of life so that confusion and competition, chaos and conflict, destruction and disintegration might not continue to make man wail and weep. The subjective aspect of the *Vedānta* is personal discipline. The realisation of the value of the *Vedānta* is in the effort to work for the salvation of society even at the risk of self-sustenance. This attitude Rāmānuja imbibed from the study of the *Drāvida-Vedānta* which claims to base its philosophy on the most vital aspect of philosophy enshrined in the Sanskrit section, namely, the functional aspect of the Fundamental Principle which employs creation and destruction of the cosmos only to put it into shape and to preserve it in that shape. In this sense administrative activity assumes importance. The doctrine of *Avatāra* of the Lord is a point in illustration.

Administration

Administration is an aspect of social function in the interest of peace and prosperity. It is a known fact in life that what is relevant is a rule or a principle that governs several individuals and instances, conformity to a set-order of what is valued. The projection of

that order and operating it successfully is the function of a wing in charge of the administration.

The twin Aspect of Service

Rāmānuja introduced the right type of administration in two ways on two different occasions. On one occasion he had to interfere with the administration of a temple, which, according to him, needed a correction. In the other case it related to a monarch already in charge of governing the country who sought the advice about administration of the right type. The first refers to the events in Śrīrangam and the second to King Viṣṇuvardhana, the Hoysala monarch.

It must be remembered that Rāmānuja was out and out a philosopher and a saint. He could not afford to ignore the importance of the super secular element operating in life. But he was not narrow-minded to be condemned as a sectarian. Never did he project any sign of dictatorship to force his thought on the unwilling section of society. Personalism as a creed and persecution as a doctrine are constituents of crime that can never be allowed to go unpunished.

The impact of Rāmāyaṇa on Rāmānuja was so intense that he derived his inspiration to evolve a healthy social life mainly from the behaviour and attitude of the great characters who figured in the epic. The work is studied in two phases, the first phase beginning with the marriage of Rāma and ending with the separation from his wife brought about by Rāvaṇa, a dreaded *Rakshasa* king of Lanka. The second phase starts from the separation of Sīta and Rāma and ends with the death of Rāvaṇa and the reunion of the separated couple. The Rāmāyaṇa is thus a study of 'life in the company of the partner' and yearning for the missing partner. Life's interest in society involves the two phases stated above.

As far as we could gather from the epic, there are four types of people entrusted with the duty of administration. They are the typical representatives of King Daśaratha and Śrī Rāma, the monkey King Sugriva and the *Rakṣasa* King Rāvaṇa. Of these Rāmānuja considers Daśaratha and Śrī Rāma as administrators worthy of recognition and approval. Between the two Daśaratha suffers from lapses. The behaviour of Śrī Rāma need not be considered on a Super humans plane as Śrī Rāma himself has said "Ātmanām Manuṣam Manye Rāmam Daśarathātmaja"¹.

I consider myself a human being by name Rāma, Son of Daśaratha.

Style of Administration Provided

Let us consider the way in which administration was carried out by Daśaratha, an emperor known to be the embodiment of *Satyā* (truth) and justice. Daśaratha himself spent the whole of his life-time under the royal umbrella mainly to keep the subjects free from want of any king in the world. He took personal interest.

*“Pāṇḍarasya āta patrasya
Chāyayām jaritam mayā”*².

I have grown old under the umbrella of peace, now too old to hold the administrative responsibility any longer.

But his administration was found to have lost sight of an important factor in life, whose significance perhaps the king could not appreciate. Śrī Rāma, his son, brings out this factor in the following observation³.

*‘Nandanti udite āditye
Nandanti astam ite ravau
Ātmano nava-budhyante
Manuṣyāḥ jīvita-kṣayam’*

With Sunrise men feel cheerful, with Sun set men do feel cheerful, but men are not aware that life is limited.

People are happy during the day from Sun-rise. They are genuinely happy because they have regular work to attend to during the day and the joyful rest during the night. If people could only keep happy throughout life both during day and night minding their business there is no occasion for any one to feel any want and be disappointed in life. That was the state of society under the regime of Daśaratha and the King's duty was not to disturb that peace which was the prerogative of every subject of his. What more could be expected of an administrators under the Sun to keep society in a state of undisturbed comfort?

But that was not all, according to Rāma. The administrator was expected to shoulder yet another responsibility. To keep people contented materially was no doubt the responsibility of the administrator. But that was limited to providing conditions for the preservation of a healthy body in a congenial atmosphere in a

working condition. There is yet another element which forms an important part of the human organism and that is the welfare of the mind or the spirit which as recognised in the Indian system of life cannot be neglected and for whose welfare also an effort has to be made. Society, therefore in the opinion of Śrī Rāma, is not merely concerned with the present but it has to think of a future. It has an educative aspect as the body grows. As the society evolves from prosperity to prosperity, so the mind must rise from the narrow outlook to the broader outlook. The growth of mind is not aimed at subserving the demands of the body and the world, but it has the duty of developing itself so that the material aspect may not enslave any longer, through terror or temptation, the ambition and aspiration of the mind. A healthy body is not enough and it would not be considered a healthy body unless it is instrumental to the development of a healthy mind which does not helplessly depend upon the body to realise its stature and joy. This is the purpose of education as understood by Rāmānuja. To ignore the mind and its welfare is to preserve the corpse to the neglect of the spirit which kept the body active and attractive. Hence it could be safely concluded from the secular point of view that education, according to Rāmānuja, is freedom from slavery towards the body⁴. Rāmānuja explains the position thus—

“Śrotaradi-jñānendriyādyarthe śabdadau
 Vāgādi karmendrya yathe vacānadau.
 Prācīna-vāsanā-janīta-tadanu
 bubhūṣarūpa-rāge avarjantyaḥ
 Vyavasthītaḥ Tadanubhave pratihate ca
 avarjaniyo dveṣo vyavasthītaḥ tau
 evaṁ jñāna-yogāya yatamānām
 niyamīta-sarvendriyam svayase kṛtvā
 prasahya sva-kāryeṣu niyojayataḥ
 Tapas-cāyām ātma-svarūpanubhava-vimukho
 Vinaṣṭo bhavati jñāna-yogārambhena
 Rāga-dveṣa-vasam agamya-navina's yet”

With regard to sound and the like which constitute the object of the sensory organs, such as the ear, and with regard to speech and the like, which are the objects of the motor organs, such as the mouth, arising out of the instinct resulting from previous experience, it is hard to avoid desire to experience (the feeling of want) and that is definitely

established. If such a want is thwarted, enmity emerges. In pure meditation, they compel the mind to yield to their pressure. Thereby the *ātman* turns back from discovering himself through meditation and finally gets lost. Hence by embarking on Jnanayoga (pure meditation) don't get lost under the unavoidable pressure of *raga* and *dveṣa*—attachment and aversion.

This emphasises that inaction contemplated in the context of pure meditation is impossible and dangerous. In other words, living in the world to be entirely unassociated with the wordly interest is even beyond dream. Duty for a social member is unavoidable and hence it should be continued in a new frame of mind. It is work without attachment—*Niṣkāmakārma*. The body is necessary, but it shall not control the spirit, lest society should lapse from the human level to that of the beast.

The primary duty of the administrator is to clear the hurdles in the way of the normal growth of life in society. Daśaratha failed to do it, according to Śrī Rāma, and the consequences were the epic.

Rāmānuja lays special emphasis on the outlook and attitude of a person, to hold administrative power. He particularly appreciates the basis on which the choice fell on Śrī Rāma as successor to his father Daśaratha⁵.

*Vyasaneṣu manuṣyānam
Bhṛsam bhavati duḥkhiṭaḥ
Utsaveṣu ca sarveṣu
Piteva paritusyati"*

He feels greatly grieved when peoples are sad. He experiences unbounded parental pleasure when people are jubilant.

Public opinion has been able to be impressed by the two outstanding attributes of Śrī Rāma, namely, unbounded sympathy towards the grief-stricken and suffering and supreme pleasure that people are prosperous and in possession of plenty. Another trait that Rāmānuja has discovered in his model administrator Śrī Rāma is that promise and proclamation are too sacred to be ignored or broken and personal interest should not count for anything and come in the way of the duty of serving the public, protecting them against outside interference, rampage and destruction. Rāma is

reported to have made this position clear to his consort Sita⁶.

*“Apyaham jīvitam jahyām
Tvām vā Sīte sa-Lakṣmaṇām
Notu pratijnam samśrūtya
Brāhmaṇaḥ viśeṣataḥ”*

My dear Sita I am ready to lay down my life, to desert even you along with my trusted brother and word Lakṣmana. but never will I be a promise breaker especially to the brahmin engaged in higher and nobler pursuits in life.

*“Tayaradarkku, magan tammāi
anri morribān tanjamāgave”⁷*

Excepting the son of Daśaratha, I would not regard any one as my saviour.

Rāmānuja came across yet another incident in Śrī Rāma which he would never forget. During the reign of Śrī Rāma life was quite normal without any factor leading to disturbance of peace and agitation. But unless some event occurs, the administrator will not have had any opportunity to prove his mettle by reacting to the situation. One such was discovered even during the time of Śrī Rāma. Society being a synthetic unit, disturbance somewhere affects the entire system and unless the defect is removed the system cannot be put on the plane of harmony, contentment and prosperity. A certain aged brahmin⁸ much against normal expectation found that his young child could not live and survive him, for it died early before his very eyes.

*“Rāja doṣaṭḥ vipadyante
Prajā hi avidhi-pālitaḥ
Asadvrittau-tu nṛpatau
Akāle mriyate janaḥ”*

Subject under improper protection perish because of the shortcomings of the protector. If the protector, the king behaves improperly, man is subjected to untimely death.

Chaos and uncertainty emerge in the absence of law and order. The brahmin ran to the King with the dead child and presented this truth. Social disorder is the result of neglect and inefficiency on the part of administration. Śrī Rāma, as the epic records in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, immediately took a personal interest and moved out to find the cause of this strange event. He found one by name

Sambuka engaged in a walk of life quite alien to him for which he was not at that time competent. This inroad on the part of an incompetent individual into a foreign field is a phenomenon which is unnatural and unless such a situation is halted, abnormal events could not be prevented. Śrī Rāma acted in a way to foster the natural development and prevent intrusion and he found that the child get back its life and its father went back extolling the administrative quality of Śrī Rāma. This principle, which was very much to the linking of Śrī Rāmānuja, made him be on the look out for the right type of men for the right type of work and by implication to avoid misfits⁹.

*"Saritaya-c-chambukan-tannai-c-cenru
Konru, ſeļu-maraiyon uyir miṭṭu"*.

He brought back to life the son of the great sage after having sighted and slain Sambukan engaged in wicked penance.

When something happens bad to a citizen, the ruler personally attends to afford him relief. That is the nature of the alertness of the administrator. Administrative power carries with it, according to Rāmānuja, alertness and dedication to put down disorder in society. It is not merely a seat of power and prestige.

Fight Against Corruption

Rāmānuja had a dislike for no one. He encouraged the person to continue his job, but to shed the defect that might taint his outlook and attitude. The individual deserves not to be sacrificed for the sake of his perversity¹⁰.

"Paḷiyai-k-kadattm Irāmānuṣan" He removes the stigma.
*"Munmai-p-paḷavinaḷ vṛaṇuttu"*¹¹.

Having uprooted the time old sins of the past.

*"Nigar inri ninra en niṣadaḷkku
Nin aruḷinkan anri-p-pugal onṇumillai"*¹².

My meanness which baffles any comparison has no resort (to improve, to change into) except your compassion.

Sympathy is the moving element on the part of the Superior to help the less fortunate. That is social interest. Perversity is only the result of ignorance and passion. With enlightenment the man who was bad prior to enlightenment become the most precious.

after enlightenment. Rāmānuja's temperament was towards converting the man by influencing the mind and making it capable of maintaining an objective view. He was not for dispensing with the man himself, for that would lead to exclusion, disappointment and ultimately revenge. The right to happiness should not be denied, but the impediments in the way of natural and healthy progress in life to be removed. It is very significant in this context to appreciate the mission of Rāmānuja in life. His mission was not to prepare a clean, new way but to clear the path of the rubble.

"Vidhi shodhaka kinkara"

With this outlook in life, for the administration of the temple of Śrīrangam he selected one Amudanār by name and it was not a new selection.

"Allā valiyai-h-kadattal

*emakkini yadum varutiam anre"*¹⁸.

I have no difficulty henceforward to keep off unhealthy paths.

Principle governing life appear both as conditioning and corresponding to events in the evolution of society or an individual. In the attempts to fix the mind on the value of life, events out of the reach of 'historic perview' do not lose historical value. Myth accordingly is history of the pre-historic past.

Selection for Service

The creed of Rāmānuja was that man has an inherent claim to the best treatment that may be accorded to any one in life. But he makes a distinction between man who are good and those who are not. It is the equipment and attitude of man towards others that makes one great or small. Particularly when a person wields administrative power he has to make a difference between persons who are useful to society and those whose function is more a hurdle and an impediment to the welfare of the people. The defect is not in the Person concerned, but in his behaviour and outlook which is after all a passing feature and which is subject to transformation into all enlightenment. Otherwise progress will not be possible and education will be meaningless. To scorn a person and disown him or even to do away with him would be an act of petty-mindedness and prejudice. The larger interest of the love of man would try to retain the individual and try to help him be relieved of his pride

and prejudice. Otherwise the administrator would become a partisan and not the devotee of wisdom which calls for the practice of universal love and respect. Rejecting the individual for the sake of folly forever is want of wisdom and it amounts to denial of the right to existence even of the person who rejects. For, the doctrine of rejecting the individual leads to social disintegration and annihilation in the end. To guard against this possible evil of anarchy, man has to try to mend man and end the rebellious trend. This is the paramount responsibility of the administrator whose main charge is to hold society together.

This doctrine was put into practice by Rāmānuja in two different spheres of administration. The first was in reference to the temple at Śrīrangam, the maintenance of which was in elucidation of the principle of harmonious unity. One Amudanār, a person of great scholarship and power, was responsible for the administration of the temple. The administration was run at variance with the principle upon which the institution was started. Rāmānuja seems to have given expression to the feeling that the administration was ill-based. Reports seem to have reached Amudanār. A direction was issued that Rāmānuja and his followers should not be allowed access to the temple¹⁴. Not aware of this direction, once Kūrēśa went to the temple. Within his hearing there was a direction that, though a follower of Rāmānuja and thus not entitled to enter the temple, still being essentially a well-meaning and pious person he might be allowed into the temple as a special case. Kūrēśa appeared to have been hurt that his association with Rāmānuja was a disqualification in the opinion of the administrator. He returned home without entering the temple. Amudanār, the administrator was a very pious person and he was also aware of the greatness of Śrī Rāmānuja and Kūrēśa, though he differed from their outlook on life. On an occasion he had to perform an ancestral ceremony. He had to search for the right type of participants in the function. Not finding any one else Amudanār went to Rāmānuja, the ascetic and prevailed upon him, to extend his co-operation. Rāmānuja directed Kūrēśa to participate in the ritual with a direction that Amudanār would not withhold any offering within his power at the ritual. Kūrēśa participated accordingly and when Amudanār, towards the end of the ritual, reminded him of the direction of the master, Kūrēśa demanded that the keys of the temple at Śrīrangam be handed over to Rāmānuja. The direction was obeyed. The next day Amudanār was sent for and Rāmānuja reinstated him as the admini-

strator with a direction that Amudanār would not fail to follow the true tradition of the temple. That tradition has been recorded in what has come to be known as *Koiloḷugu* or the tradition of the temple at Śrīrangam. The act of Rāmānuja may be considered as an unfair deal with Amudanār. But what Amudanār himself said makes the point very clear. The first person who sang in praise of Rāmānuja in his work bearing the title '*Rāmānuja Nuṛṇṇādādi*' in Tamil, repeats in each verse the name Rāmānuja and draws pointed attention to his inherent greatness. In the fourth verse¹⁵, he expresses his deep gratitude towards the master for his compassion and for enlightening him.

*"Ennai-p-puviyil oru poruḷ ākki
maruḷ śuranda munnai-p-puḷḷavinai
Vērar urttu-ūḷi-mudal vanaiyē
panne-p panitta irāmānuśan
paran pādumum en senni-t-tarikka vaiṭhān
enakku ēdum śidaiyu illaiyē".*

Rāmānuja shaped me to be a countable person in the world. He removed all the trends of life encompassed by ignorance, made me praise the deity presiding over time and the world. He also made me wear on the head the feet of the Supreme deity, a symbol of lasting dependence on power. I have no more any trouble. He also made me realise that I am only for service. I have missed nothing, having understood the significance of a member in society, the social consciousness as understood by Rāmānuja, that I am one among the many and that there is a Lord to control.

His words are—

*"Kūratāḷvān śaraṇ
Kūḍiya pin
paḷṭiyai-k-kadattum
Irāmānuśan puḷḷ pādī
Allā valḷiyai-k-kadattal
Enakkini yadum varuttam anrē"*¹⁶.

After securing the guidance of Kurēśa, I went into raptures over the qualities of Rāmānuja who is above questionable qualities. I have no difficulty henceforth in keeping off the polluting path.

*"Śurakkum terivum unarrum
Solay-putil vāi amudam parakkum
Iruvinai paṭṭaṭs—ōḍum
Pediyl uḷḷir uraikkinranam"*¹⁷.

If you employ the term (with its implication) Rāmānuja, knowledge and awareness will ooze, If you mention the term necktar will fill the mouth. The stain of the to-fold deeds (puṇya and pāpa) would disappear. O ! men if you want to live in the world, I will tell you of the glory which could overpower *Kali*—perversion which works against the current of *dharma*—social harmony:

The above incident must not be construed as a doctrine of conversion, for such a doctrine was not acceptable to Rāmānuja in principle. Conversion implies some element of force which intereferes with the smooth-sailing of the mind and turns it away from one angle to another from which it may find it hard to retrace. Conversion, according to Rāmānuja is the opening of the mind and providing it with an opportunity to see for itself what is true or otherwise. It is in this sense that Amudanār was converted to the view of life held by Rāmānuja. Thu Amudanār found it easy with no strain whatever to avoid the uncivilized walk of life. Compelled by sympathy for his fellow-beings Amudanār suggests that the influence of *Kali* can be resisted by repeating the name of Rāmānuja which instils a spirit of longing for leading a noble life. The noble way as Amudanār understands is the normal life that a man is expected to lead and by *Kali* he refers to perverted thought and outlook.¹⁸ Perversity would be removed and everything one deserves in the world including wisdom would be within reach through the effort of Rāmānuja.

Initiation

The principle, which Rāmānuja expected of an administrator, was also found to be applied by the great Hoysala King Visnuvardhana. As a result of persecution by the intolerant chola King. Rāmānuja in obedience to the intention of his conscience—keeper Kūrēśa repaired towards the uplands called *Mēlnāḍu* and reached a place which later on came to be called *Toṇḍanūr*—the city of the devotee (*Bakta*). Here he discovered different systems of religion flourishing, the most major of them being at that time Jainism. He was accosted by the local Jains and he had to establish his stand in

philosophy from which a social system emerged and to maintain which, Rāmānuja toiled all through his life. It is reported that he met the objections of two thousand antagonists with wonderful capacity and put their debating power to a pulverised condition¹⁹ This has been graphically described as Rāmānuja being responsible for crushing the two thousand opponents of his in a grinding mill.

When the King became his disciple he gave him the name Visnuvardhana,²⁰ which literally means one who nourishes the Universal Spirit. The King took special interest in developing the temple at Mélukōṭe and building a fort around it to signify that foreign influence may not move into the region. The fort is a symbol of the spirit to resist any force which would be an inducement towards adjustment under expediency, thus losing the native character of steadiness. At the same time he prevailed upon the king to desist from any thought of forcible conversion of people, because he knew full-well that such an attempt was not only unnatural and improper but would ultimately lead to the petty feelings of discontent, vengeance and ultimately revolt and disintegration leading to total annihilation of the contending communities. Hence it is that the region of Karnāṭaka is regarded as the seat of paradise in the Indian continent where all systems of religion are free to develop, protection and non-interference being assured. It is very significant to note here that the great Vedāntacharyas, namely Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Purnaprajña were able to give their best to mankind from their respective seats at Śrīrūgéri, Yadugiri (as Mélukōṭe is called) and Udupi. The installation of Gomaṭésvara is proof of the spirit of tolerance among different thinkers, orthodox and heterodox. It is here that we find unity with its variety in happy combination.²¹

*"Ittingaitu iṣṭa purāṇattīrum
Śamaṇarum śākkīyarum
Valinḍu vāḍu śeyvīragalum maṭṭum
Nam teyvamum agi nīran*

*.....
Onrum poyyillai poruṇinē"*

Scholars relying upon the purāṇa devoted to the divine symbol Linga, the Śramaṇās (Jains) the Śākkīyas (Buddhist) the powerful debaters in Logic. He projected and he remained also my Supreme Lord.

In this connection one should remember that difference does not

imply contradiction, but steps to remove the mist on vision. This is not the invention of Rāmānuja out of necessity. This is the *Vedic* culture, the power of which he was able to feel and realize as expressed by Śrīparankuṣa in the Tamil section of the *Veda* called Tiruvāimoli, in verse 5 of the opening section. People according to the mode of their understanding describe their own destiny shaping Gods and kneel before them. Those Gods do meet and fulfil the demands of the supplicants. All that is true, because the one Real Supreme maintains and sustains them in the world. The thought lying behind this verse is that all walks of life do lead to the same goal, but the goal is viewed in different colours. The principle underlying the direction of Rāmānuja, that though uniformity may not be possible or realisable, homogeneity should not be destroyed. Society is an organism with its limbs with different shapes and functions, all together preserving the system, the organism to which they belong. Variety should not indulge in clash but must be co-operative; that is the social view as Rāmānuja felt. That is the outlook on life for the common people though they may not be aware of the basic element called the philosophic ground of existence and value. The figures of Rāmānuja and Visnuvardhana in the temple at Belūr are a reminder of the attitude of the preacher and the behaviour of the administrator.²³

The spirit of toleration could be noticed even in the family life of the king. He did not compel his wife against her will to become a vaishnavite.

Seasoned Counsellors

It would not be inappropriate to observe that Rāmānuja's social philosophy based on the *Vedāntic* structure of reality is drawn through the perennial fountain of the epic, the Rāmāyaṇa. The historic approach to problems is confined to events in life. The purpose behind their occurrence belongs to the sphere of speculative study. It does not come within the purview of observation. Rāmānuja and leaders of his frame of mind offer primarily the principles which should guide social evolution. With this 'know-how' it would be easy to maintain normalcy in social equilibrium. In this view the social system in the Rāmāyaṇa comes to be regarded as an earlier type, though it is taken as myth on the ground that it is beyond the reach of the time-scale of modern historians. The view about the qualification of a person in administration has been stated in the previous section. It should never be the motto of substituting

man for man, but to retain the man by removing the disqualification in him. The spirit underlying this attitude is to maintain the synthesis at the peak level of enlightened purity in which public and private interests are not set against each other and in which the private or the personal interest is regarded as a part and parcel of public interest with no claim to special treatment.

The administrator, eminent though he may be, cannot discharge his duty without the aid of the counsellors whose task is to keep the administrator ever alert towards his status as a responsible person devoted entirely and whole-heartedly to the instinctive demands of the subjects or their aspirations which do not have real bearing on the progress of society as a whole. If it is catering to the needs of the society which has no inclination towards elevated, disciplined and effectionate existence in company, that would be a mere change from one state of experience to a different stage without the emergence of quality. Therefore, the paramount demand is to march in the direction of unity and fraternity leading to a stage of universal love and respect.

With this view, Rāmānuja appreciated the presence of the counsellors and their constant advice to the administrator in the interest of the person in power and the people who tasted the benefits of that power. In his own instance he had the unique privilege and advantage of having such a companion whom we considered his conscience—keeper and that was the great Kūrēśa, the very embodiment of discipline and devotion.²³

*"Soyam Rāmānuja munīḥ api
svīya-muktim karasthām
yat-sambhāhāt amanuta
katham varnyate kūrānāthaḥ."*

That great ascetic Rāmānuja felt assured of his emancipation on the basis of his relationship with Kūrēśa. If it be so how can we comprehend the eminence of Kūrēśa.

Also noteworthy is the role of Śelvanambi in the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom.²⁴ His devotion made his *ācārya* a person of great attainments. His discipline, though it may sound strange, did bring to light the greatness of *ācārya* who was able to find a devotee of the highest order.

In the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāmānuja found a few instances in which the administrator and his counsellors failed to conform to the demands of their office²⁵. So too did Rāmānuja experience a situation which,

however, he was able to overcome, thanks to his disciple Kureśa.

Preceptor as the Practising Leader

In another context Rāmānuja recognised that personal authority ought not to be allowed to cloud and set aside the value of Law and tradition. That was in connection with his attempt in writing out his famous treatise called Śrī Bhāṣya on the *Vedānta Sūtras*. At some point, discussing the nature of the *Jīva* Rāmānuja committed a deviation. His disciple Kureśa who was his scribe refused his co-operation. This led to the situation when Rāmānuja tries to exercise his authority as a master over the servant scribe. The silent persistence of the devoted scribe opened the eyes of his master to folly and then the proper definition on the nature of *Jīva* was formulated and the master extolled his pupil as a servant having the power of the saviour in times of distress and confusion. This incident is narrated in the *Guruparaṁparā Prabhāvam* in the *Maṇipravāḷa language*²⁸. The counsellor had the only aim of keeping the administrator in safety under all circumstances without allowing him to swerve from the proper course of administration. Fearing that the master's life was in danger and deeply interested in keeping the master safe to spread his message of social welfare, Kureśa embarked on a venture. He impersonated his master and arranged for his exit from Śrīrangam towards the west outside the region of King Chola, lest something might happen to his master affecting his life, and thus the benefit to the world be denied. This is the so-called Chola persecution and the attempt of Kureśa to resist the temptation to adjust to the occasion at the cost of the well-being of society.

In the life of Rāmānuja, the incident of divorce leading to his *Sanyāsa* illustrates the point that the duty in life is more vital and sacred than the duty which concerns only as personal. Rāmānuja married a lady and was a willing partner in life till he discovered that she would not allow him to employ the principles of life which were sublime and beneficial in a universal measure. The wife was unable to appreciate the difference between the doctrine of distinction and division as applied to life. Seclusion in society on the basis of achievement leads to division. But an indiscriminate adherence to unity as against division destroys the doctrine of distinction. Rāmānuja's wife could not appreciate the significance of the two doctrines. She identified the two which led to the welcome doctrine of the scale-complex of social awareness. In consequence, society suffered from improper treatment at the hands of different sections

who were bound together as one unit. If Rāmānuja had continued his partnership, it might not have been possible for him to play his role in life and to practise the real demand of society of preserving the doctrine of distinction without allowing it to be merged in division. In modern language it may be said to be an attitude of life, of conservative discipline personally, and liberal accommodation towards society. This is a doctrine which not only preserves the self, but urges it to function as an active member of society in the interest of Universal welfare. This is in a way a reflection of the incident noticed in the life of Daśaratha. Rāmānuja tried on three occasions to persuade his companion in life to his outlook so that the couple could smoothly perform their duty towards society. Persuasion not having succeeded, he gave her up and took to *Sanyāsa*. It is the belief among the *Śrīvaiṣṇavas* that *Sanyāsa* in the formal sense is vital for developing personality to perfection.

Disciplined Loyalty

The loyalty towards the master on the part of his disciple was too deep to be diluted. The disciple was more particular about the prestige of the master who exercised his personal authority. Obedience to the authority of the master's whim would have led the master to ridicule and disaffection on the consideration that he yielded to a deviation from the proper course of observation and assessment. The devotion of Kureśa compelled him, therefore, not to obey the master's command. At the same time his devotion to the person of the master was equally deep and great. He would, therefore, not insult him by offering his opinion in the matter. Though it would not amount to insult, Kureśa feared the possibility of arrogance in the presence of the master. That was the way of his subtle thinking.

This situation led the master to seek clarification from his *guru* Coṣṭhipurṇa. He employed his non-co-operating pupil Kūrēśa to seek on his behalf clarification on the point which the disciple very promptly undertook. The master's solution to the problem was not in accordance with the view that Rāmānuja had held. He immediately corrected himself and with all smile and readiness Kūrēśa continued his participation as the *ācārya's* scribe. This incident reveals the exalted maxim entertained and put into practice only by the very great, that the master is defied only because he is to be deified.

This equipment of cultural loyalty is a very essential factor among persons wielding power and his vassals engaged as advisers to keep society away from grief and turmoil. This is drawn from the epi-

sode of Vasiṣṭha in the Rāmāyaṇa.

Confrontation and Persecution

The temperament of Rāmānuja would not permit him to take up a fight against any apponent only to shoot himself into prominence in life. But he would not be idle and hesitant to offer his view against any opposition on the basis of his conviction which derived its strength and life from the fountain of reality through unbroken tradition. His great work the Śrī Bhaṣya is the finest example of such an approach. The main opponent he had to confront was the great leader Śāṅkaracarya who evolved a philosophy according to which when all the difference were removed, the finite self and the infinite were identical in essence. This view, according to Rāmānuja, was fundamentally fallacious, because, it involved the rejection of aspects of experience outside the control of human interference. In an integrated view the structure of Real would be a complex unity which provides for a rational appreciation of life in its process towards emancipation and participation in the scheme of an evolving system. Greatmen are interested only in the logical power of their thought and the structural nature of the object²⁷.

*"Param Brahma eva ajnam
bhrama-parigatam samsarati Hi
śruti-nyāyāpetam"*.

The Supreme Brahman becomes non-sentient, being enveloped by ignorance and consequently gets helplessly involved in the cyclic course of life. This attitude is opposed to *Śruti* and logic.

The purport is that, it is opposed to the *Vedic* thought and to the law of consistency to hold that Brahman the Supreme is subjected to *Stupor* and change. When we deal with society, we should include every aspect of life. That is the synthetic view. The opponents are treated as rivals in the intellectual fray. But they are all members in a symposium on the problem of life in its comprehension. Lesser minds enter the field of discussion and dispute under the constraint of scoring personal victory for themselves and their cause. It is these illtrained experts who introduced elements alien to the intellectual mettle affecting the sanctity of truth and reality. Differences of opinion did not prevent Rāmānuja from extending his regard to others. But he would not yield under any circumstances to any power or pressure not intrinsic to the subject under debate. There

was a great scholar, contemporary of Rāmānuja by name Uyya-k-Koṇḍār²⁸.

*"Uyya-k-koṇḍār viṣayamaga
Uḍaiyavar arulicceyda vārtaiyai
ninaip-padu".*

Remember in this context the statement that Rāmānuja made about Uyya-k-Koṇḍār.

Who advocated the doctrine of *Bhakti*, the principle of appearing the deity, as the relevant and potent instrument of salvation. Rāmānuja was the advocate of the doctrine of *Prapatti*, submission to the will of the deity, as a corollary in keeping with the nature of the Real. Uyya-k-Koṇḍār listened to the exposition of Rāmānuja's doctrine of *Prapatti*. He seemed to have appreciated the exclusive merit of the doctrine, but he said that he was disinclined to give up his faith in the doctrine of *bhakti*. The observation of Rāmānuja was that thought was not followed by action generally owing to the lack of divine grace, even though the intellect is strong enough to recognise the worth of the doctrine. There was no persecution of any kind nor any contempt involved in the debate. This attitude of respect and tolerance for others views is traced to the spirit recognised in the *Drāvida Vedānta*²⁹.

*"Avar avar, tām tām
Arind-i-vārettri
Iyarivar emberunān enṣu
Ṣuvar miṣai-c-cattiyu,
Vaittum toḷuvar".*

Different people, according to their mental might, sing in praise of deities treating them as their Supreme Lord and putting their figures on the walls and installing them for perpetual observance and worship. Importance is to the attitude not to the figure.

*"Avar avar-tama tamaḍu
ari-v-ari-vagai-vagai
Avar-avar iraiyavar ena
aḍi-y-aḍaiyargal!"*³⁰.

Different approach the same deity as their understanding permits them.

By this we know that Rāmānuja is not a man of times, but a man

of principles. That Jains were pulverised into powder is not true when we see his attitude in this statement. He was not a man to force or compel any one.

The deities of their choice would never fail their devotees, for the Supreme deity permits them to continue the path of their choice. This idea is reflected in the Bhagaved-gīta.⁸¹

*"Yepi anya-devatā-bhaktāḥ
Yajante sradhyanvitaḥ
tepi māmēva kaunteya
yajanti-avidhi-purvakam"*.

Even the devotees of other Gods offering worship with zeal, all of them do worship Me alone but only indirectly.

*"Vedānta-vākya-jātam hi paramapuruṣa
Śarīratayā avasthūtanam Indrādīnām
aradhyatvam vidadhat, atma bhūtasya
parama-purusasyaiva saksat aradhya-
tvam vidadhātī"*⁸².

The *Vedāntic* statements collectively reveal that, since all the Gods are the Sarira of the Supreme God, their worship of the Supreme Lord who is their innerself. It means that service to man is service to God.

It is the firm brief of Rāmānuja that between *Prapatti* and *Bhakti*, the latter is the indirect means because it implies that the seeking self is apart from the saving self.

At Tondanur Rāmānuja had to encounter formidable opposition to his view of life from the local scholars numbering about two thousand who upheld the theory of Jainism which rejects monism. The basic stand of Jainism is the negation of a deity distinct from the *Jivas* and Superior to them in status, entitled to be termed '*Īśvara*' or Lord. The second feature is that the *Jiva* an immaterial stuff is flexible in nature and subject to expansion and contraction. These two tendencies are at variance with the philosophy of the *Vedas*. For it disown the concepts of basic perfection and the inherent changelessness of the mental entity. When he was accosted, Rāmānuja exposed the untenability of the opponents stand with such vigour and variety that the opponents intellectual power was described to have been crushed in the mill of logic. It is strange and foreign to the nature of Rāmānuja that the graphic description

of this intellectual warfare should have been circulated in the literal sense that opponents were got crushed³³.

Facing Peril

There was another incident in which Kūrēśa, the pupil of Rāmānuja, joined in the battle with the Śaivite King Chola³⁴. On behalf of his master. It revealed the king's behaviour which was at once vulgar and loathsome. King Chola wanted the assent of the Rāmānuja School of thinkers for his view that "Śiva was the top-most deity". The proposition enunciated by the Chola King was "Śivāt Parataram nāsti"—There is nothing Superior to the concept of Śiva. Quick came the answer from Kūrēśa—"Droṇa masti tatah param"—Beyond that there is a concept answering to the term Droṇa. The words Śiva and Droṇa represent the different measures the food grains. Droṇa is a measure considerably bigger than Śiva. He made a pun of it which is also philosophically true. The truth of this difference also pertains to the difference between Viṣṇu and Śiva, the two concepts taken up for controversial consideration. This event is recorded in the famous booklet called *Kūrēśa-Vijayam*, in which Kūrēśa has furnished the refutation to the claim made in favour of Śiva. A verse in commemoration of this event is even now current among the Śrivaishnavas and their admirers—"Jayati Hari-paratva—Sathāpanodveva—modat".

Kūrēśa was sent for to participate. He smelt danger for the life of Rāmānuja and as his alter ego went to the King's court to participate, what Kūrēśa feared actually happened. In the debate that ensued unflinchingly maintained the doctrine against the interest of the Chola king, with unbounded joy at getting an opportunity to maintain the Supremacy of Hari in debate explaining along the lines of logic the ideas inset in the *Upaniṣads* and putting down the Chola King who was anxious to establish the Supremacy of Śiva.

Upaniṣhad-upa-gūdhān
nyāyatorthan vivrn van
Adharita—śiva-paramyarthi
Colādhi-rājah
Śamita-vimata-vadah
*Śantimām-kuranathah.*³⁵

Kūrēśa, the embodiment of patience, put down the doctrines of opponents, put down the Chola King who was keen on establishing the Supreme eminence of Śiva, by making

clear, with the help of the principles of knowledge, the thought lying deep in the *Upaniṣads*. This is loyalty to culture, not yielding to confusion.

Kūrēṣa the great comes out victorious in the fray with peace in mind. Emotion was roused and the Chola King ordered pulling out the eyes of the opponents and prevented them further from their normal activity³⁶. As a disciple of Rāmānuja he is reported to have voluntarily made himself blind. He did not resist the physical illtreatment meted out by the king, with this exclamation that even in the field of punishment the opponent should not be the direct offender. This is the doctrine of voluntary suffering. This is an instance of conscience not being cowed down by emotional power.³⁷

Temple Administration

Rāmānuja was interested in the continuity and spread of the culture that he imbibed. The main wing that he chose for this purpose was administration. Education had to meet the mental and spiritual needs of society even as industry and agriculture met the physical and material needs of mankind. It is said that he enjoyed the company of seven hundred ascetics, (*sanyāsins*), seventy-four scholars and intellectuals continuing his mission as his executives and twelve thousand disciplined persons, both men and women of different groups and castes.³⁸

*"Sam sevataḥ samyami sapta satyā
pīṭhaḥ catus-saptatibhiḥ sametaḥ
Anyairanantaḥ api viṣṇubhataḥ
Āste ādhīrangam yatisārvabhaumaḥ"*.

Waited upon by seven hundred ascetics, by the group of seventy-four "title holders" and numerous other devotees of Viṣṇu, Rāmānuja Yatiśārvabhauma, the Supreme ascetic, stays in Śrīrangam. The title holders are those entitled to function as *ācāryapurushas*.

This involves the doctrine of functional diversity in unity, dignity associated with it.

The Institution of Ācāryapurushas

Upto the time of Rāmānuja, the privilege of passing culture from master to pupil was limited to one person who was considered the best in the opinion of the *ācārya*. The person who was chosen was expected to be the custodian of culture and others, if they were

qualified and competent, were looked upon as his aids. Thus the *Guruparamaparā* or the line of teachers was maintained. Its aim was not merely to communicate, knowledge, but also to exercise under obligation the privilege of performing what is known as the *pañchasamskāra*.³⁹

*"Vāsudevākhyan param Brahmaiva
 āśrita-vātsalam, vāśrīta samāśraya-
 niyatvaya sevecchaya catur-dhā ava-tiṣṭhate
 tatca vāsudevākhya-para-brahmopasanam
 Vedāntesu yathāśram
 Sangrahya bhagavan Hariḥ
 Bhaktānukampaya vadvān
 Sam-cikṣepa yathāśukham"*.

The Supreme Brahman designated as Vasudeva, with a motherly attitude towards the seekers, for the sake of being approached by devotees, out of free will exists in four forms. And that is the meditation upon the Supreme Brahman, namely, Vasudeva.

It is a life discipline according to Rāmānuja, to maintain the association with the Lord. The *Sāmakara* (efficacy) is five-fold and is the basic requirement for a person choosing the path of life which Rāmānuja opened to the public as the true and traditional path. It is an invitation to the *Brahmacārya* of the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* order like the initiation to the *brahmacārya* of the brahmin order. Rāmānuja felt that restricting this privilege to a single individual would stand in the way of the vast majority who were eager to derive the benefit, but who might not be able to meet the person privileged to perform the *Samskāra*. He, therefore, chose seventy-four among his followers. He empowered them with this privilege of contacting people and assisting them in the shaping of their lives. He distributed them among the many temple-centres to continue his mission in life on his behalf. The chosen persons were accordingly designated *ācāryapurushas*⁴⁰, the term *ācārya* being reserved to designate Rāmānuja exclusively. The persons chosen were great scholars themselves and they were considered the disciplined soldiers of culture under the leadership of Rāmānuja. The *ācāryapurushas* were, with very few exceptions, *gṛhasthas* who continued that privilege and passed on the tradition to their descendents. Thus in the cultural society constituted by Rāmānuja, the seventy-four families even to day continue, to spread the culture of Rāmānuja. As a mark of protection to them against

lapsas, they are privileged to receive in a special measure a few offerings in the temples to which they are attached as an indication of divine appreciation and blessings. Later on, a few *Sanyāsins* engaged in the temple at the behest of the master institutionalised their service, bringing into existence a custom of *Sanyāsins* being selected for service. These families and institutions were the centres of cultural and religious expansion and they are practically regarded as University centres to use the modern expression. This was a movement of mass education to keep society efficient and enlightened.

Rāmānuja insisted on the maintenance and promotion of *Ubhaya-vedānta* in life. The twin problems were not to miss at any time the thought of the eternal aspect in life and to refrain from being led away by the passing attractions around. This intention of Rāmānuja is recorded by his disciple in the following verse⁴¹.

“*Puṇyāmbhoja-vikāśāya
Pāpa-dhvānta kṣayāya ca
Śrīmān āvirabhūt bhumau
Rāmānuja divākaraḥ.*”

For the blossoming of the lotus of merit and for the removal of the darkness of sin, the glorious Sun, Rāmānuja appeared on the earth.

That is the period of clear vision and energetic life.

Culture of the Temples

The Source of Social Energy—Temple Administration : To enable the common people not to forget in life the divine element without which life would be dry and dusty, Rāmānuja emphasised the importance of the institution of temple worship. He followed the system of the *Pañcharātha* sponsored by Viṣṇu, the Supreme Lord directly. The regard that the *Pañcharātra* commends is the same as the message from the mouth of the Lord. There is another system of temple worship known as the *Vaikhānasa* which owes its origin to the *Vedas*. The preference to the *Pañcharātra* was based on the consideration that this *āgama* is concerned with the essentials of worship. The distinction between *Vaikhānasa* and the *Pañcharātra* in value may be likened to the difference between the *Bhagavad-gīta* as a mode of approach towards refinement of life and the other modes enumerated in the bulky epic, the *Mahābhārata* of which the *Bhagavad-gīta* forms the final part. It may be remembered in this connection that Rāmānuja did not introduce the system of *Pañcharātra* in any temple on

his own initiative. The *āgamas* themselves indicate that in the many temples they were to be followed. But that system must have suffered a set-back sometime prior to the advent of Rāmānuja. The *Vaiṣṇava* system also prevalent in some of the temples. But the temples were under the influence of the *Vedāntins* who differed from Rāmānuja. In a few temples where Rāmānuja started to reintroduce the system of *Pañcharātra* the local priests would not accept the change mainly for the reason that as followers of *Vaiṣṇava* they would be deprived of their privilege and that though they were willing to follow the *Pañcharātra* style of worship, the doctrine of keeping the two systems separate stood in the way of the *Vaiṣṇava* adopting the *Pañcharātra* system by abandoning their own, as in the case of *Varṇasaṅkara*, indiscriminate admixture in society was proscribed in the *Bhagavat-gīta*⁴².

"Na buddhibhedam janayet"

Do not detract the mind. Do not leave the mind at the mind at the cross-roads.

*"Karmaṇi asakto jñāna yogādhikāra
yogyopi vyapadesyah śiṣṭaḥ
loka-rakṣārtham svācāreṇa
śiṣṭa-lokānām dharma-niścayam
cikīrṣuḥ karma-yogam eva kuryāt"*⁴³

Unattached in *Karma*, a person fit to be engaged in *Jñāna* Yoga, a man though renowned and remarkable, for the sake of preserving social order, by indulging in doing the duty assigned to him with the purpose of providing faith in *Dharma* for the other members of society, shall continue to observe only the *Karmayoga*

The *āgama Saṁskāra* also comes under proscription. Not applying the principle of coercion. Rāmānuja allowed the *Vaiṣṇava* to continue, not because the priests would never permit themselves to be thrown out of their duty in the temple. This is not an indication of failure on the part of Rāmānuja to effect a change in the temple worship, but is an expression of his firm will not to employ force and compel people against their inclination and ability. The *Vaiṣṇava* system relates to an aspirant after *mokṣa* where as the *Pañcharātra* lays stress on the service aspect of life which is the native virtue of all aspirants to salvation.

In the 'Śrīrangam temple, with Amudanār as the administrative head, the procedure to be followed in the worship is briefly recorded in a work named *Kovil*⁴⁴ *oḷḷu* or the procedure that obtains in Śrīrangam.

While Rāmānuja was staying at Tondanūr in the region of Yādayagiri (Mēlukōṭe) as it was then known, Vishnuvardhana was attracted towards him and he offered himself to be his disciple, with the help of that monarch administrative responsibility was distributed among the local people there. Thought appears in various forms. The forms may be similar, complementary or contradictory. The aim of thought is only to remove the contradiction. Different forms of thought depend upon the different stands the people entertain, Rāmānuja wanted the disputation to be conducted in a spirit of friendly co-operation and made the opponents realise the untenability of narrow points of view. This is stated by his immediate disciple in the *Dhāthipañcaka*⁴⁵.

*"Pāṣaṇḍa-druma śaṁḍa dāvadaḥanaḥ
cārayāka-sailā śaṁḍi
Baudha-dhvānta-nirāsa-vāsarapatṭi
Jāinebha kanthiravaḥ
Māyāvāda-Bhujāṅga-bhaṅga garuḍaḥ
Traividha-cūḍāmaṇiḥ
Śrīraṅgēśa-jayadhvaḥ
Vijayate Rāmānujoyam munih".*

Rāmānuja is a powerful silencer of the schools of Carvaka, Baudha, Jaina, Māyāvāda and Śaivism. He is the upholder of the thought of 'Supreme Synthesis' the Lord of Śrīrangam.

The tone of administration by the King was in conformity with the instructions of Rāmānuja, that in wielding power the administrator must invariably avoid pressure against the will of the people, as pressure would lead to discontent and destroy the social frame. This principle was employed in all walks of life. It must have appealed to the king who must have experienced during the pre-Rāmānuja period the aggressive instinct of the Jains and Buddhists who settled there. The king suffered neglect bordering on humiliation at the hands of his co-religionists for a personal deformity which was not his making. His reaction towards them could have been retaliatory after he obtained acceptance by Rāmānuja.⁴⁶ Strange and significant was the attitude of the king under influence of

Rāmānuja who never felt worried that one of his queens would not of her own accord shift from Jainism to the view of her Lord, while other ladies accepted the system of Rāmānuja in their life. In this context Rāmānuja's attitude towards his wife prior to his *Sanyāsa* becomes significant. Having consented according to custom to follow in the footsteps of her husband, Rāmānuja's wife did not approve of the conduct of her husband, in his dealings with members of other castes. Rāmānuja was least worried about these differences between himself and his wife. His dissatisfaction was due to her personal pride on some consideration or another and disdain to members of other communities. This types of her social behaviour affected Rāmānuja so much that he felt that separation was the only remedy. He would not accept her again after *Sanyāsa* as wife, because his *āśrama* would not permit such an association.

Rāmānuja's concern for the welfare of mankind compelled him to overlook formal restrictions which would not permit the extension of benefit to the unqualified. This is in the field of education. To use the modern word broadcasting would not be out of tune. When Rāmānuja approached his master Goṣṭhīpūrṇa to know about the doctrine of 'Surrender', he was directed not to reveal the doctrine to the unworthy lest they should abuse it. The master's interest lay in preventing the reckless application of this doctrine, but Rāmānuja ignored the direction and spread the message from the top of the temple to persons who had gathered there. He seemed to have remembered the situation when Lord Krishna himself announced this doctrine to Arjuna in the battle field of Kūrukṣetra where the gathering was undeniably a mixed one. Śrī Krishna announced the doctrine of surrender. The main listener was Arjuna, no doubt. But the *Mahābhārata* records that in the large gathering there were a few fortunate people who heard the message. The doctrine does not suffer even if the person who employs it does not remain true and faithful to the tradition. Rāmānuja gave out in broad outlines the value of the doctrine with the expectation that if the listeners were really interested, they would come forward in a formal way to grasp the doctrine in full. This was the liberal attitude of Rāmānuja. This approach of Rāmānuja to the doctrine of surrender may be said to correspond to the preface section in the works of the author. It is on this account that Goṣṭhīpūrṇa admired his apparently unfaithful pupil and discovered in him the *ācārya* with the special characteristic of compassion.

During the time of Vishnuvardhana a fort was constructed around the temple Mēlukōṭe. With the discovery of the image of Tirunārāyaṇa at Mēlukōṭe, Rāmānuja is reported to have called that region 'Tirunārāyaṇapuram'. The term 'Mēlukōṭe' is from the original Tamil 'Mēlukōṭtai', which means the fort in the west, to distinguish it from Śrīraṅgam with its *kottai* or fort, which belongs to the eastern side of the land. The word *Mēlukōṭe* with its link to the Śrīraṅgam fort carried with it a religious sentiment revolving about the link between *Jñāna* and *Ānanda*. The Mēlukōṭe temple is regarded as *Jñānamantapa* and the Śrīraṅgam temple as *Bhōgamantapa* of the four significant temples for Śrīraṅgam, Tirupati, Kāñci and Tirunārāyaṇapūram. The four religious centres are remembered in order during the religious rituals observed every day at the *Sandhya*, the obligatory daily duty enjoined on the brahmin.⁴⁷

*Śrīraṅga maṅgalamaṇim karuṇāniyāsan
Śrī Venkātādri śikharālaya kālamāgham
Śrī Hasti Śaila Śikharōjvala pārtijātam
Śrī śam namāmi śirasa-yadu-śailadīpam*".

I prostrate before the auspicious gem in Śrīraṅgam, the home of compassion, the dark cloud at the crest of Venkātadri (Tirupati), the intensely bright celestial flower of the Hasti Śaila (Kāñci) and the light on the Yadu mountain (Mēlukōṭe)

This idea and order are also recorded in the first verse of Tiruvāimoli⁴⁸. The same idea is contained in the opening verse of Tiruvāimoli as stated below—

*"Nalam uḍaiyavan, aruḷinān,
adhipati śuḍar-aḍi"*.

The possessor of auspicious qualities the spring of compassion, the Supreme Lord, the bright person.

It is at Mēlukōṭe that Śrī Rāmānuja took up again the robes of the *Sanyāsin* at the shrine of *Dattātreyā* (The Lord teaching the four *Vedas*). Rāmānuja lived in Mēlukōṭe for twelve years evolving the form of social life he had in his mind. During this time, he is reported to have gone to Delhi and brought back the idol of Sampat Kumara. He taught his classical work of *Śrī Bhāṣya* to one by name Somayaji Āndān, who has paid his mead of praise to Amudanār of Śrīraṅgam for having described the personality of

Rāmānuja and for having gifted to mankind the *Prapanna Gāyatri*. Even during the days of Rāmānuja, it is rumoured, people from various parts made their rich offerings to maintain the institution of the *Rāmānujakūṭa*. Later, however, a few inscriptions indicate that gifts were made for the same purpose⁴⁹. It may be concluded from this that institution of 'Rāmānuja-kūṭa' led to the development of temple wealth with vast lands and ornaments. The administration during the later periods not being quite uniform as a result of change, the 'Rāmānuja-Kūṭa' has changed beyond recognition. This is yet an example of Rāmānuja's desire that power should be distributed, but the policy shall be held sacred and unalterable. The former rulers of Mysore right from Rajawodeyar to Chikkadēvarāja Wodeyar evinced keen interest in the temple and contributed their bounteous mite in various forms, Śrī Krishnarāja Wodeyar III in particular appears to have been involved in maintaining the temple institution in proper form, like his predecessor Rāja Wodeyar. His figure in stone is installed within the temple at Mēlukōṭe. The images of the Mysore kings in the temple as devout rulers may appear to be a reminder of the purpose for which Rāmānuja himself left behind a metallic form of himself which is since being worshipped with name,

"*Tān uḡanda Tīrumanī*",⁵⁰

to oblige the local population who would not have stayed there without him. This is the first frame of Rāmānuja made during his life time at his direction. The metallic figure at Mēlukōṭe therefore, has a special significance for the followers of Rāmānuja. His Dāśarathi who moved about in the region of Karnāṭaka when Rāmānuja returned to Śrīrangam appeared to have got a few temples built with the help of Viṣṇvardhana, *Pancha-Narayana temples*.⁵¹ At the desire of Āndhrapūrṇa the foot print of Rāmānuja was carved on a stone at Sāligrāma,⁵² a few miles away from Mēlukōṭe. That region was also held in great reverence and daily worship is offered. The names of *Āndan* and *Āccān*, the cook and the companion of Rāmānuja in the absence of Kūreśa are mentioned.⁵³ Āndan is reportedly a relative of Rāmānuja, *Āccān* was looked upon as a scholar of eminence comparable to the great Nyaya philosopher—Udayana—the author of a very terse *Nyaya-Kusumāṅgalī*.

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2. *Ibid.*, II, ii.
3. Vālmiki : *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Ayodhyakāṇḍa*, CV 24.
4. Rāmānuja : *Gīta Bhāṣya*, III 34.
5. Vālmiki : *Rāmāyaṇa*, II, iii, 40.
6. *Ibid.*, III, x, 18.
7. Ālvārs : *Divyaprabhandam*, *Tiruvāṁmoli*, III, vi, 8.
8. Vālmiki : *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Uttarakāṇḍa*, 73, 16.
9. Ālvārs : *Divyaprabhandam*, *Perumāḷ Tirumoli*, X, 9.
10. Amudanār : *Rāmānuja Nūrandādi*, verse 7.
11. *Ibid.*, verse 4.
12. *Ibid.*, verse 48 and Cf. verse 32.
13. Amudanār : *Rāmānuja Nūrandādi*, verse 7.
14. Perumāḷ Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, P. 351.
15. Amudanār : *Rāmānuja Nūrandādi*, verse 4.
16. Amudanār Op. Cit., verse 7.
17. *Ibid.*, verse 43.
18. Amudanār, verse 32.
19. Perumāḷ Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, P. 341.
Govindacharyaswamin, A. : *Life of Rāmānuja*, P. 182.
Rice, B.L. : *Mysore Gazetteer*. Vol. I, P. 338.
20. Note : *Vishnuvardhana*, *Vīṣṇu*, means all comprising *Vardhana* development.
21. Cf. Ālvārs : *Divyaprabhandam*, *Tiruvāṁmoli*, IV, x, 5.
Govindacharyaswamin, A. : *Life of Rāmānuja*, P. 134.
22. *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. V. Ins. No. 131, 58.
23. Kūrēṣa : *Pañcastava*, last stanza.
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26. Perumāḷ Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, P. 313.
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28. *Mumukṣupādī*, Section on *Carmaśloka*.
29. Ālvārs : *Divyaprabhandam*, *Iyarp-mudal Tiruvandādi*, verse 14.
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33. Perumāḷ Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, pp. 340-341.
34. The Proposition Enunciated by the Chola King was, *Śivat Parataram nāsti*.
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37. Perumāḷ Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, P. 331.
38. Perumāḷ Jiyar, Op. cit., P. 368.

39. Rāmānuja : *Śrī Bhāṣya*, II, 11, 42.
40. Perumāḷ Jiyar : *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam*, PP. 366-7.
41. Perumāḷ Jiyar, Op. cit., P. 407.
42. *Bhagavad-gīta*, III, 26.
43. Rāmānuja : *Gīta Bhāṣya*, III, 26.
44. Note : *Koḷi* : The term *Koḷi* denotes a temple in general. But to the *Śrīvaiṣṇavas* *Koḷi* is primarily the temple at Srirangam.
45. Dāśrathi : *Dhāthipaṇcaka*, (Collection of Stotra Ratnagaṇa) (ed.), Tirumale Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati, 1970, verse 1.
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47. Daily Prayer.
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49. *Mysore Archaeological Report*, 1907, Para 36, P. 7.
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CHAPTER IX

Rāmānuja and the Doctrine of Service

The concept of Service—Service Involving the Barter System—Conventional Level—Service from the Constitutional Position—The Area of Service—Rāmānuja's Doctrine of Service—Alertness in the Field of Social Service—The Ritual of Service—The Sanctity of the Social Servant—The Impact of Rāmānuja's Doctrine of Social Service.

The concept of service as it appears at various stages is dealt with here and the concept as Rāmānuja considered is dealt with in a later section to indicate that his conception of service marks the final stage. Introducing a discussion on the concept of service. Rāmānuja starts from the crudest form to the most natural and refined form of service. The doctrine of service has been borrowed from the 'Bhagavad-gīta' which describes performance or *Karma* at various stages of performance, from the familiar to the unfamiliar. The doctrine of true service is untenable from the lay man's point of view. But it is normally 'and unavoidable' from the enlightened stand.

Service is an inherent behaviour of a social existent. The specimen in an embodiment of service. Society, likened to human organism, recognises service as the Universal principle of life. The Indian tradition is built on this basis.

The *R̥gveda* in the *Khila* section neglected by the "devotee of the skin and its potency" to the exclusion of the vital element which holds and function. This tradition is continued in the *Dr̥āviḍa* Section. It was followed by Rāmānuja.

"*Toṇḍṁṁṁ tiruvadiyetunai aḷḷāl tuṇai-itan*"¹.

I am engaged in thy service. Thy fact alone are my protection. Nothing else do I regard as my shield. I do thus exclaim.

"*Kiṇkarāsmi Hr̥stikaśa, bhuyo bhuyo asmikinkarāḥ*"².

My Lord I am yours event for over and in every won.
Uṇṇadam un aḍiyārkkū aḍimai"³.

I have taken upon me to serve your followers my Lord.

“*Nitya kimkaro-bhavāni*”⁴

We can see from this that Rāmānuja’s emphasis on service is an exercise of his inherent right as admitted by tradition.

The Concept of Service

To appreciate the significance of the ‘Doctrine of Service’ as expounded by Rāmānuja, it is necessary to be aware of the factors which go to form the concept of service as implied in the doctrine of *Śeṣatva* associated with the doctrine of *Samānādhikāraṇya*, the concept of dynamic dependents. Ordinarily service refers to an activity or a behaviour. It involves two persons, one of them the agent of activity and the other the beneficiary. We come across the expression ‘serving one’s own self’ in which we do not find two people separated from each other. All the same the distinction between the working part and the enjoying part is not denied. What actually is involved in this aspect of service is a condition which is not present but felt very desirable to be realized. This is the aim. The other aspect is the work or the attitude which would pave the way to realize the end. This is considered as the servicing aspect of life. In other words, service is an instrument of satisfaction. As recorded in the *R̥gveda* “Service is the *Sādhna* (means) for the *phala* (result), particularly applicable to human society. Service naturally would come to a halt with the realization of purpose.

Service involving the Barter System

The concept of service is not limited to a section of society alone. By nature every member of society is entitled to receive some benefits to keep himself happy. But he cannot continue only to receive without making any contribution to the members from whom he expects the benefits. This mutual inter-dependence involves the notion that man is both the agent of service and the person to be benefited from service. This is a necessity whether it is to be one’s liking or not. The choice is restricted to the need of the receiver. The element of regard for the neighbour and his well-being manifests itself in this arrangement. We, therefore, evolve the principle of existence by meeting the needs of one another interest of the well-being of the group as a whole.

Another point deserves to be noticed in this connection, the doctrine of master and servant finds a place in this scheme. At the servicing level, constrained by the necessity of self-preservation as

is normally understood, the servant permits himself to be an employee in services and undertakes to follow the wishes of the employing master to the extent to which he could preserve himself. Though the master also depends upon his employee for self-maintenance, he has the privilege of deciding the mode of service of the employee. As members of a contract, both the partners forget the underlying principle of interdependence which does not make a distinction between the employer and the employee as far as the preservation aspect of life is concerned.

Conventional level

The type of relationship noticed in the previous section emerges in a slightly refined way. The element of humanity is introduced. The employer entertain a consideration towards the employees with sympathy. It is no longer relationship limited to the economic aspect in which the rule that works is minimum effort and maximum benefit. A few concessions are permitted to the receiving partner at the cost of comfort on the part of the giver. This may be treated as a gift or an offer with a pious intention.

Though it is not termed service. It could be noticed that in this attitude the underlying spirit is commission towards the recipient and a voluntary offer to provide him with some comforts not directly connected with the work assigned to him. This may be regarded as the privilege of the worker or the generosity of the employer in the direction of exertion to relieve the labourer of his strain to some extent at least. It is this attitude which introduces the sense of gratitude in human relationship on the part of the receiving partner. It is an indication that the value of co-existence is raised to a point higher than the mere economic relationship. Failure here and there to preserve this tie intact may not be of much significance if it is occasioned by conditions unrelated to the human mind.

But the application of this type of service may lead to certain extremes in the long run. It may create a group which would like to get benefits without deserving them. It may also lead the generous partner to develop an attitude that his generosity is likely to be a waste. It is in such circumstances that society splits the groups of helpless beggars and merciless masters. Perhaps the disparity between the 'Haves and the Havenots' is the logical conclusion of this step adopted and practised mechanically over a long span of time. This may be the abuse of the doctrine of service to society.

To guard against this unpleasant possibility, a regulation is introduced in life that the recipient shall have the obligation of serving also, an idea which keeps him away from idleness. Service therefore, takes the form of work with discipline on the part of the recipient, that he will try as far as possible not to receive benefits lying idle without any aim. If this spirit is maintained, service would appear in its noble form.

Service from the Constitutional Position

In the preceding paragraph the consideration was towards the weak and the needy. The competent factor of society volunteers to render assistance. The rendering involves a measure of self-imposed restriction to provide better conditions of living for the weaker sections of society. Normally there is no insistence that the section which receives the benefit should work for its welfare apart from merely receiving the benefit.

This group which indulges in service to society being urged by humanitarian considerations may set differently, if its offer is not put to right use. Generosity towards the undeserving could be anything but virtue. There is a possibility of this generosity being halted from the consideration of purpose or use to which it is put by the group which gets the benefit.

The constitutional structure of society is a compulsive force on all the members to engage themselves in some form of activity. This activity will not be service in the strict sense of the term, if it is directed towards promoting individual ends. Service is service only when it is for society and on behalf of society. It is not a projection of imaginative thought. It is an engagement in fulfilment of the purpose for which man is accepted as a member of society is a purposive unit which realizes its purpose through the members it accommodates. In this view man realizes that he is a member primarily of society and that he has an obligation to discharge as long as he continues as its member. The thought of any gain for himself as member is only secondary. The true gain is how far he is able to discharge his duty from the position in which he is placed. In consequence the thought of any return from society as reward for his service does not find a place. Indian tradition is best explained in the maxim expressed through the *Bhagavad-gīta* 'Duty for duty's sake with no thought directed towards personal benefit from the performance of duty'.

“*Śeṣatvam ātmavikku svarūpam*⁵

Śeṣatvam ilādapadu svarūpam illai”.

Śeṣatva is the characteristic of *atman*. If *Śeṣatva* is denied, *atman* cannot have any claim to existence.

Service therefore becomes a habit of the individual. It no longer needs a mandate from outside. Accordingly to be serve in life is to cease to be alive.

The Area of Service

Any disorder anywhere in the human organism is a source of pain and concern. The relief lies in setting right the disorder. This aspect is observed and referred to by Sudarśana, the great commentator on *Śrī Bhasya* of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja refers to the ‘Concept of body, *Vigraha* as he terms it as follows—

“*Brāhmaṇyādikām devādīnām apti asti*

tat khalu adṛṣṭa-viśeṣa

Sambadha rūpam natu

Jātirūpam, Brāhmaṇadibhih

Brāhmaṇyādiṣu utpatti-mātram”⁶

The forms such as Brahmana belong even to the divinities. The nature of those forms is a mark of specific gift or power, but not in the form of *Jāti* or caste such as birth by the Brahmin man and brahmin woman as couple.

The main idea is that this division between brahmin and others is based on the function and not the parentage. Caste system is personal and is indirectly helpful to maintain social harmony.

The human organism may be conceived as a microscopic presentation of social organism. The human organism is perhaps the best developed form. We notice in it a variety of parts similar and dissimilar to one other. The parts function in their own way. They keep themselves interlinked. The interlinking is not direct, though it may appear so. All the factors derive their energy from the organism which is not a bundle of factors or a mere assemblage of parts. They are brought together a plan and purpose by which the functioning continues in the organism.

Though the function assigned to every member is the same which is to serve the purpose of the unit, yet the field in which the members function and the way in which they function differ. It is the func-

tional difference of this type which makes variety possible and intelligible. In one sense all the factors enjoy the same status. In another sense they greatly differ from one another determined by the field of their operation. In other words, if the members for abolition of 'distinction and inequality' what would be the condition of the organism could well be imagined. This 'concept of body' referred to by Rāmānuja one best be applied to the members functioning in society. Rāmānuja clearly lays down the principle that function fills the caste with life and glow and not mere birth. This applies to all section of society which may claim recognition as social constituents. Here is an indication that the social outlook of Rāmānuja influenced by this view of life.

Service is service to the Lord, the Source. This is the main aspect. There is another aspect which Rāmānuja has not failed to notice in connection with his idea of social service. That aspect is service to the dependents on the Lord. It is an extension of service from the Sovereign to His Vassals in devotion who constitute the visible section to be served.

A person born in a particular caste and not doing the job required by the caste is a person who misses the opportunity. The other person who rebels against caste is one who has no opportunity. This is the tragedy of keeping 'birth and function' each apart from the other. Following his predecessors in the field, Rāmānuja takes pride in directing his service to those who are devoted to the devotees of the Lord. As Kulaśekhara has mentioned in his *Mukunḍamālā*?

*"Tvad—Bhṛtya—Bhṛtya—
Paricāraka—Bhṛtya—Bhṛtya—
Bhṛtyasya—Bhṛtya iti mam smara"*.

Remember me as in the service of the servant, of the servant.
of your servant".

This principle suggests that the source is served by serving the connected members of the source. A few elements in the body are linked to the other elements and the expectation is that the service is mutual. But in the light of the above principle this, the so called inter-service is, in reality, the service to the source through the medium. This is what Rāmānuja considers as the privilege of being in the service of the *Bhāgavata*, the devotee of Bhagavan.

Rāmānuja's Doctrine of Service

The concept of service emerges with full vigour and glow only

when man feels sincerely that he is a member of the system and that he has it as an obligation to conduct himself as a true member. This idea is generally beyond the ken of the common people whose mind is clouded by interests which have no direct bearing on the unit to which they belong. Paradoxical as it may seem, the true interest of life cannot be served unless the petty interests are kept out. Restraint is a necessary pre-condition to feel the pulse of freedom. As a social member, if this maxim is not kept in view, life becomes a menacing factor to one engaged in service. Rāmānuja was very much alive to this aspect of social structure which by any stretch of imagination could not be maintained as a model evolved by the members belonging to it. Human organism clearly reveals this aspect. We know that in experience the various parts of human organism, if they are damaged may be substituted by their similars employing skill and technology. Till now, and perhaps for all times, life has not been introduced into a lifeless assemblage of parts and projected as a living human entity. Our effort can be confined to regrouping the elements. This would be an artificial grouping. But it can never be the effective substitute. Accordingly the social organism, like the human organism, is a natural presentation with a few fundamantal laws set forth to preserve the organism throughout the process of its functioning. Subject to that, the talent of man has vast scope either to preserve the unit in the best form or to spoil it perhaps beyond the stage of recovery. This principle is recognized throughout from the most ancient times and that is the constitutional order running through the several constituent factors⁸ Rāmānuja, commenting on verse 2, chapter XIII of the *Bhagaved-gīta* observes thus—

“Yathā kṣetram kṣetrajñya—
 viśeṣaṇa-taika
 svabhāvātayā, tad-aprthak-siddhaḥ
 tat-samānādhi-kāraṇyeṇaiva nirdeśyam,
 tatha-kṣetram
 kṣatyanam ca madviśeṣaṇa-taika...
 svabhāvātayā
 madaprthak-siddheh, mat-samānādhikāraṇyeṇaiva
 nirdeśyau viddhi prthivyadi sanghata
 rūpasya hṣetrasya kṣetrañyasya ca
 bhagavat śariratāika svabhāvā-svarūpatayā
 bhagavad-ātmakatvam

*cidācitah sarva yāsthayoḥ
parama-puruṣa-śarīratvena tat...
prakāratayaiva padārthatvaḥ"*

The body by nature is only the possession of the mind the possessor of the body, considered only on the principle of homogeneity based on inseparability. In the same way the body and the mind, being only my attributes, they are inseparable from me and must be treated as linked to me by *Samānadhikāraṇya*. The complex of earth and other elements and of the mind also, being by function the body of the Lord, their Soul, their *ātman* is the Lord. Both the sentient, and the non-sentient, in all their conditions, are the *Śarīra*, of the Supreme Lord, only as such they are counted as existents.

*"Servasmin Karmāṇi
Vyavasāyākmika budhiḥka
Mumukṣuṇa annuṣṭeṇ karmāṇibuddhiḥ
Vyavasāyātmika Vyavāsāyah niścāyah
Sāhi buddhiḥ ātmā yātamyā-nisecaya
pūrvikā"*⁹

In every form of act the unwavering mental state is one and the same. The seeker after release engages himself in an act. His mind develops the stage of *Vyavasāya*. *Vyavasāya* means firmness. That mind reveals the true nature of the *ātman* and is therefore, unwavering.

Alertness in the field of Social Service

One of the requirements of a member devoted to social service is that he should be alert and watchful. More often than not the current of mechanical life introduces changes and innovations which appear attractive and adoptable. They may in the long run weaken the social structure and present or picture of confusion by blocking the main constituents which must continue along with social evolution. This upheaval is likened to the periodic occurrence in nature of a quake, a volcano, a cyclone or a flood which would sweep out of existence much of the social content. The nature of self preservation by itself would not be enough. The gift of talent is pressed into service toward off the disaster. It may be a reaction subsequent to the occurrence. It may be a preventive remedy. This alertness is a mark of statesmanship.

Likewise, the talent of the social servant is trained to effect a remedy when disorder sets in through prescribed methods which would not permit men to be a prey of fleeting fortunes. Caution against danger is essential. It is this approach towards social problems that is rated as most essential, though least thought of in life. It is this attitude to detect the abnormal trend in life which, if not controlled, would lead to the formation of Cancer in social life. Actual prevention may be difficult and out of control for sometime, but caution and preparedness would keep under check the evil from spreading. The human organism is looked after with great care to preserve and promote the normal health and to be free from defects brought about by negligence and exposure. This principle is termed "*Asthāne Bhayasanikīva*."

"*Pattāṇḍu, pattāṇḍu*"¹⁰ for many years to be free from mishaps. Intense love for a person suspects danger to his safety in time to come, though there may be no possibility. It is keeping prepared to meet any untoward challenge in the future. This is foresight, a sign of statesmanship a common phrase among the '*Śrīvaiṣṇavas*'. It implies the operation of caution against any possible mishap. This principle is the consequence of faith in the theory that society is a unit in its own right and not a creation by members who get together to uphold an idea and adopt it in life.

The Ritual of Service

The status of Rāmānuja as an individual engaged in Social Service reveals itself as occupying an attitude beyond the reach of many stalwarts who preceded him. Right from the earliest times cultural tradition recognises supreme happiness and unchecked prosperity as the committed goal of one and all in society. How to achieve the goal has also been dwelt upon members constituting might pursue goal individually by withdrawing their interest from perishing pursuits in the world. This was considered asceticism in the technical sense. The result would be visible only after total severance is effected. That would be an exit the world. It implies aloofness from the surrounding and pessimism in life in this world. In ordinary language it is a steady pursuit after escapism, probably under the belief that the unknown future would be more relishable than the actual present. This attitude reduces society to bide the time and evince no interest or seat.

But life is the embodiment of joy and satisfaction. Were it not so the idea of pursue it after joy would never occur to any in society .

Life being a reality its nature too must be of the same mettle. Irresistible optimism is manifest every where in society that is characterised by the element of hope and confidence which prevails in every human mind. That being so, the present life cannot be completely devoid of that aspect of life. The logic of struggle for existence is based on the unrealised fact that life in any form of society could realise its real worth and wealth.

Rāmānuja appreciated this aspect of life flowing from the doctrine of "*aprthak-siddhi*"¹¹ the theory of nonseparateness based on the other fundamental truth that the true goal of life must also be the ground of life. The process of life is an attempt to realize the basic nature of existence, its work and function. It is not a process to gain something afresh. It is in this sense the concept of *Mokṣa* Releases, becomes significant. The process, therefore, is the elimination of alien elements. Thus the goal of life is to discover that the ground is identical with the goal. The process of evolution from the ground to the goal involves infinity as the time factor. In this process of evolution disturbances occur here and there due to the waves of change in society causing confusion and despair to the members involved. If the mind could be cleared of its confusion and if it continues to be steady and dedicated to the call of unity of purpose, disaster could be kept at bay, though it cannot be totally annihilated.

This outlook and attitude takes the form of social ritualism which cannot be avoided or explained away as a concept of no consequence. Rāmānuja was keen on introducing the type of life in society which would keep all the members functioning in their own way affection and dedication, meeting the needs including bread comfort.

It is as a result of this spirit and outlook that Rāmānuja ushered in a society which came to be known as the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* society. This group that he introduced formed a meaningful society within the bigger society which moved along the current of life adjusting itself according to circumstances which was called the *Samasārika* way of life. The importance of the temples and the introduction of scholars and servants, the inclusion of members belonging to different castes and sexes, the organised way in which co-operation of every member was assured and the keen interest in meeting the genuine want of every member of society and the facilities to achieve all these were made possible under the direction of Rāmānuja. The *Tiruvāimoli*—the tamil version of *Vedic* Wisdom in its essence—was of considerable value to Rāmānuja. He particularly rejoiced when he

observed the social life under the administration of the Pāṇḍyan King with the assistance of his great councillor Śelvanambi, referred to in the preceding chapter.

Social interest suffered a set-back when self-interest and short sightedness take possession of the leaders who offer to lead mankind along the path of prosperity. Rāmānuja, therefore, laid special stress on this point that the ambitious master must first be a true servant if he has to succeed in life as a master²².

*"Ennaiyum en—Uḍaimaiyaiyum
Un Sakkara—p—pori oṟṟikkoṇḍu
Nin arule puriṇdu irundān"*

Having received your enlightening message, I seek your grace for fulfilling the purpose of life.

*"Niennai Kai—K—Koṇḍapin piravi enṟum
Kaḍalum Vāṟṟi Pārum Pādam aginṟadu"*

My Lord, when you accepted me, the drifting nature of my mind towards *Samsāra* became dry and I have occupied the position of plenty.

This *maxim* guided Rāmānuja in maintaining the theory that caste consideration as determined by nature does not count for much. Normally it leads to a sense of inequality among members, leading to disruption and disaster.

The Sancity of the Social Servant

The term service to society is not confined to any section or stage of life. It is relative to the stand that a person takes for himself in relation to society. Rāmānuja, being a thinker belonging to the most lofty category, thought of himself as a member of society quite different from what others thought about themselves. The organic structure of society which he repeatedly emphasised made him realize that his function was determined by two points of view. The first was that he considered himself a privileged person standing apart to serve society with all his equipments and resources and thus pave the way for social progress and prosperity. This attitude implies that he had to determine and abide by a way of life which would take the form of service to society. If the will is not there he would not cease to be, but he would be deprived of his function to serve society which is the aim in life.

There is another stand which Rāmānuja appreciated to the utmost.

As a member of society and its inseparable part, by nature the individual is a functionary engaged in social service. It is the normal structure, it is the privilege of habit from the time of birth, the factor of will and determination to serve. In this case it would only imply that service-mindedness is an adjunct and not a habit, that would go against the very constitution of the individual as a member of the social organism. To cease to think in this way is to deny the very existence of the individual. This is the common feature of all individuals constituting society. The difference varies according to the degree of awareness of this truth. Hence as part of the social unit, if the individual is not to be a dead cell, he has to continue his normal habit which, in that normal form, is service. Man has only to pray that this privilege of his may not be denied in life. This idea is emphasised in the expression.

“*Vāḷu-v-Iḷā-aḍimai*”¹⁸

Seyya Vāṇdum nām

We are to do acts of service without a break. It may look as if the water used for purposes of drinking and the clothes used for wearing by persons leading an aimless life have committed sins.

It is our coveted privilege to be engaged in service without a break. Accordingly service being the aim and function of life the individual has neither time nor mind to think of measures of self-protection. For society that has allowed him existence does not fail to feed him even though he may be lethargic and undeserving. This idea may appear strange to the modern mind which recognises that labour and reward, work and benefit are interlinked.

On this point Rāmānuja draws the inspiration from the doctrine of *Niskāmakarma* which does not connect duty with promise.¹⁹ Commenting on the verse 41, Adhyaya II of the *Bhagavad-gīta*, Rāmānuja says.

“*Sarvasmīn Karmāṇi*

Vyavasāyātmike buddhiḥ īka

Mumkṣuṇa anuṣṭheyē Karmāṇi buddhiḥ

Vyavasāyātmika Vyavaśāyah ni seayah

Sāhi buddhiḥ ātma yātnātmya-niścaya

pūrvikā”

In every form of act the unwavering state is one and the same. The seeker after release engages himself in an act.

His mind develops the stage of vyavasaya. Vyavasāya means firmness. That mind reveals the true nature of the *ātman* and therefore unwavering.

The underlying idea is that the main aim of an effort should not be the passing attractions in life. Service is not a medium for gain, but service is for the sake of service. The link is there, but it is not the inter link. The example of the *Asvathā* tree mentioned in the *Bhagavad-gīta* spurred Rāmānuja to another thought which is quite familiar to mankind. The seed sown in the earth becomes a root primarily and later grows into a mighty tree putting forth fine flowers and yielding juicy fruits besides providing huge shade. The gardener who waters the tree confines his attention to the root in the soil, but he does not spray the water over the branches or flowers or fruits. The root feeds the entire tree inclusive of its branches and it is the turn of the branches to offer fruits and flowers to the needy. Upon this analogy Rāmānuja has adopted the interpretation of the *Bhagavad-gīta* that the deed and the result of it, *karma* and *karma phala* are not interlinked. This is considered the highest form of service with no concern for the consequences of the act for the agent. Naturally it would be a behaviour with full delight, because it is the normally constituted style of functioning. In another context, in the kingdom of the Pāṇḍyan King, the observation of the wise has been recorded thus.

"Māniḍa Sāḍiyar

Parugum nīrum uḍukkum Kūraiyyum

*Pāvam Śeydanadaām"*¹⁵

The purport of the expression is that the dress and the drink have been put to waste actually because their worth and value could not be appreciated by the users.

"Svadharme nidhanam Śreyah

*Paradharma bhayāvaḥ"*¹⁶

Devoted to one's duty, if one dies without achievement that condition is much better than encroaching upon alien duty in the hope of quick success, for that is beset with dangers.

Finally service, according to Rāmānuja, is not an act of grace and condescension. The social servant has, therefore, no right to expect any appreciation in return. The greatest reward would be to appreciate the significance of the act of service by the recipient and his

willingness to be take along the path which leads him to the goal of ambition, namely, service to society as part of his life.

According to Rāmānuja, service is a reflection of the aim and attitude of man in society. Normally personal aim and protection are the guiding factors in human activity. This being common to all men, clash is inevitable and disorder is unavoidable. Human virtue gets transformed into vice. True service is to fix the mind on the welfare of the neighbour to utmost satisfaction. Service gains in value if it is offered in all zeal and enthusiasm. Service is real service if it is not tainted with any thought of personal benefit accruing from service. Service is the proud privilege of persons who accept strict discipline for themselves. Subjective asceticism and objective generosity are the two aspects of service. Such service put into practise has the indirect purpose of educating and elevating the recipients to be eligible to enter the field of service. Service becomes laborative if people who are benefitted by service continue to be mere passive recipients without permitting themselves to be worthy of being admitted to service. It is here Rāmānuja laid special emphasis on the competence of his chosen successors who came to be known as the *Ācāryapurusa*s to put themselves to give a helping hand to the willing section of society to move towards the heights of polished culture which otherwise would remain a mere utopia.

The Impact of Rāmānuja's doctrine of Social Services

This section is devoted to an assessment of the doctrine of social service as enunciated by Rāmānuja. So far the different types of social service were considered as a necessary step to determine the distinguishing features of Rāmānuja's doctrine of service.

Socialism is evolved on the axiom that each and every individual belonging to society shall be provided with necessities of existence comfort. Any discrimination involves disservice and that leads to clamour and conflict.

Life is a process of experience in which exists an unending battle against inequality. To survive is to keep under check inequality. But it has not been possible at any time to wipe out this inequality because of factors which emerge now and then in society, to disturb the smooth sailing.

Nature is the granary of human life. Provision is there in plenty. Man ceaselessly toils to reap the harvest to the utmost extent to keep himself happy and contented. The brain power spreads out in different scientific forms to analyse the contributory power of nature and

to utilise that power to his taste. Scientific talent, in the name of discovery and invention, is readjustment of the types of gift contained in nature. Scientific advancement also is a possible scheme to encourage what may be termed exploitation of culture. This is one of the steps to keep man ever ambitious and discontented, ever helpful and confident, always engaged in readjustment of the natural apparatus of comfort.

A stage arises where men enter into conflict among themselves not on the basis of production from nature, but on the consideration of distribution of the spoils. A situation develops in which, in the presence of plenty, man clashes with man over the share due to him. The presence of plenty may also be the source of discontentment and disorder. To express the idea in another way, poverty mounts as plenty shows itself. This situation leads man to a consideration to replace greed and conflict. It may be termed the training of the mind to subject itself to some kind of self-imposed restriction. The neighbour tends to be regarded as the alter-ego. This is the conventional order permitted to operate in society so that the plenty repudiated from nature may not be improperly and adversely used.

Another stage arises in which man regards himself not as a privileged entrant, but as a normal part of society. At this stage he is tempted to think of himself in the social setup. He realizes that he is constitutionally bound to function like nature and provide for the best interest of society as a unit. His attention is no longer on the individual as an individual. He now views himself as well as others as inseparable members of an organism destined to function as such without any other motive in view.

This stand, perhaps the highest, is in thorough contrast with the other stand where the guiding principle is exploitation of others for self-protection. The conventional stand referred to above appears to be a golden mean, but it loses sight of the fundamental fact that society is an organism existing in its own right and not evolved or instituted by the members who form part of it claiming a privilege to dismantle it, if it should not prove suitable and satisfactory.

The concept of service is described in various stages. Man can never afford to be inactive. The significance of activity must be brought to light. That could be only in stages. This procedure of treating *Karma* from the savage level to the saintly level is adopted in the *Bhagavad-gīta*. It may be remembered that Arjuna refused to act in the beginning, but finally resolved to act. The stand of

Arjuna in the battle-ground before and after receiving enlightenment from Krishna deserves our attention. At the end of the first chapter Arjuna flatly refused to engage himself in war. In the concluding portion of the XVIII chapter (Bhagavad-gīta), the self-same Arjuna took a resolve that he would participate in the battle as desired by Krishna on being enlightened.

Rāmānuja was inspired by the law of *Śarīrātmabhāva* which he discovered in the *Vedic* texts. Harmony could exist according to this law, only when the principle is recognised that the aggregates are dependent upon the unit which maintains them by virtue of it being primordial. He was further impressed by the law of protection and maintenance from the concept of the tree.

From this point of view Rāmānuja developed his system of social life. As is commonly understood and believed, the immediate aim in social service is to make adequate provisions for existence and exultation. But that would not be enough, because the receiving side continues without refinement. It is, therefore, necessary to introduce the habit of regulation in utilising the provisions available. It may appear at first as unwarranted. Excess without regulation is the cause of unhealthy habits and consequences. The human organism preserves the law of harmony and any excess anywhere in the organism is controlled or thrown away.

This regulation is the awareness that anything beyond limits and in disregard of a regular order is not only injurious but dangerous too. This principle of awareness Rāmānuja has understood as the *Yoga* way which is defined at *Karma Śu Kau salam* (Skilful handling). This skill is a necessity for everyone, it is of utmost importance.

The pride and satisfaction of Rāmānuja is that he is aware of this skill and that he is anxious to acquaint every member of society with this, so that interdependence may not be a weapon against ignorance but an assembly to move about in joy and estasy. The term *Yoga* which Rāmānuja has borrowed from the *Bhagavad-gīta* is the enduring awareness that all the individuals belonging to the society, owe their existence and prosperity to that Source—the one element which keeps every one delighted in lasting affection for all times.

It would, therefore, be not improper to admit that with this basic understanding ruling mankind, the world would be a home of peace and prosperity for all times to come. Any disturbance to this order can be overcome without much strain and effort if the principle is kept in mind. It may not be too much to say that the type of social life envisaged by Rāmānuja deserves universal adoption.

Rāmānuja regarded the entire universe as the field of operation. The impact of his social system did not suffer a set-back, even though the philosophy and religion which he built were outside the concern of persons who confined their attention to conditions of peaceful living in this world.

The survival value of the doctrine of service as formulated by Rāmānuja has to be determined not with reference to the people who adopt the doctrine in life. It is not the fault of the *ācārya*. The pity is his followers who have not imbibed his spirit in its entirety which alone would hold them together.

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CHAPTER X

Rāmānuja's Legacy

The Legacy of Rāmānuja—The Caste System Enjoined in the *Vedas* including the *Varṇadharma*—The response to the Initiative of Rāmānuja—Rāmānuja's role as an Educationalist—Donations and Contributions—The Mite of the Ācāryapurushas After Rāmānuja—Benefits—The Doctrine of One Aim—Decay.

The Legacy that Rāmānuja Left Behind

The legacy that Rāmānuja left behind him deserves close scrutiny if one has to determine what he contributed to the progress of the world on a permanent basis. Like everyone of the saintly personalities that India produced, Rāmānuja subjected himself to a discipline of mind and spirit in a way that could be considered unusual. There was nothing mystic or magical about the way in which Rāmānuja developed his personality and influenced the society around him. But he was very alert and appreciative of the type of understanding and evaluation of experience at the sublime level. By instinct he was intolerant of any one being considered with contempt and in difference.

The two principles that ever guided his life and mind were an objectice attitude and a synthetic vision. Error or injustice, according to him, was a result of the shortcomings of the agent of experience. In error, according to Rāmānuja, the minor element would appear as the major, the dependant as the independent and the ordinary as the extraordinary, the fleeting as the permanent. That way the more man gets puffed up, the greater is his grief in peridition. Humility is not an accomplishment, but it is inborn nature not to be missed. With this attitude Rāmānuja felt a burning love for all and entertained a strong desire that no one should be denied the chance of enlightenment, elevation and happiness which he could realise in his own way. Rāmānuja, therefore, tried to vitalise the basic spiritual instinct in everyone and to develop it through mind and body. The inner attitude was of paramount importance to him,

for that would allow the intellect and the physical body to keep fresh with the sanctifying power of the spiritual pulse. That way caste, colour, creed and all other extrinsic difference appeared to him as several distinctions to the exclusion of the doctrine of inequality in society.

The Caste System enjoined in the Vedas including the Varṇadharma

Dharma is a disciplinary measure to elevate the struggling self from slumber to wakefulness that it is a spark of the Divine Absolute. This discipline carries with it in most cases a sense of satisfaction and vanity that a stage of achievement has been reached. This has been considered a disqualification for one in the journey towards perfection in life. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* is very clear that human effort, however heroic and glorious it may be, is abortive. The mind that is helpless and entirely dependent cannot play the part of a conqueror under any circumstances. True education in philosophy is to help one to shed this wrong notion and vanity and realise that only the Absolute can halt or help the progress of life. This is the import of the doctrine of surrender.

This doctrine of surrender or *Parapatti* which forbids self-effort to progress does not accommodate the doctrine of inaction and lethargy. All activity appears in a new colour and glow and gains in full vigour in the form of service that is the spontaneous behaviour of the body in relation to its possessing Spirit. This is *Kainkarya* now under free will and with all enthusiasm with the hope that the service would not fail to be in accord with the purpose of the Absolute of which it is the body. Therefore, Rāmānuja's insistence on the doctrine of service is that man is the beloved object of attention and care of the Supreme Lord.

In this light the caste discipline appears in a new light. Inequality being banished, the question of like and dislike does not arise, and therefore the need for choice and selection does not arise. In the language of Śrī Krishna—

*"Sva dharme nidhanam Śreyah
Paradharmo bhayā yahaiḥ"*¹.

Native habits are preferable even in the face of extinction.
Alien attractions lead to fear.

*"Svenaiva upādātam yogyatayā
Svadharmā-bhūte Karmayoge
Vartamānasya*

*Ekasmin Jahmani
aprāpta phalatayā
nidhanamapi śreyah*"³

Being able to utilise normally without exertion adhering to the Karmayoga which is one's native feature, in the birth in which the duty is undertaken, if death occurs before the discharge of duty in full even than it leads to progress.

The purport is that a person engages himself in an activity natural to his temperament. Even if he fails to reap the result, it is better that he perishes engaged in that particular activity than divert his attention to an activity alien to his nature. According to Rāmānuja, temptation from outside should not be allowed as a substitute for the natural healthy habit. In yet another verse the significance of co-operation is emphasised.

*"Dēvān bhāyayata anena
Tedevāḥ bhāyayantu vaḥ
Parasparam bhāyayantaḥ
Śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha*"³.

Through the sacrifice worship the Gods, and those Gods will come to your help, thus attain to prosperity by obliging mutually.

Rāmānuja explains as follows—

*"Parasparam bhāyayantaḥ
Param śreyaḥ
Mokṣakhayam avāpsyata*"⁴.

Helping each other with respect and love you will reach the Supreme Summit of Light known as Mokṣa.

The purport is—above the Gods, may they adore you also. Thus with mutual respect may you together reach prosperity. This verse recognises the inherent dignity of every act and aspect and warns against assuming that whatever is fresh and foreign is good and great.

This conclusion of status uniformity of members in society was realised by Rāmānuja through the influence of the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* which emphasised the power and value of the spiritual bond between man and his Creator in a world where man loses his real vision and acts under the force of impulse and habits under the influence of the material frame and environment. Rāmānuja is not bothered about

when man gets *mukti* or liberation. According to him, *mukti* is the birthright of man who enters the world. It may be any time from the time of birth to eternity. The doctrine of *Karma* cannot be denied, nor the doctrine that man passes from birth through death till he achieves *mukti*. True *mukti* is the conviction that he is the body of the Supreme Spirit in function to behave as directed and never to permit the play of habit and instinct including conscience to over-rule the spiritual growth, for these habits are the forces of the material world, the result of inter connection which is short-lived and which detracts man from his two-fold purpose of keeping awake and happy always.

This attitude is common to one and all in the world of creation. The corollary is that the enlightened world recognises only co-operation and affection and esteem for every other member of society without the least touch of the ego, because philosophically man is neither free nor independent.

This outlook on life and discipline in life and attitude towards society Rāmānuja derives from the deep study of the *Pranava* the *Aṣṭakaṣari* the *Upaniṣads* and the *Drāviḍa Vedānta*. All the other branches of knowledge dealing with the prescribed and prescribed activities recognise only one principle according to Rāmānuja and that is pure, untarnished behaviour and activity performed with zest and devotion within the limits of the frame in which the human mind is lodged. Rāmānuja, therefore, insists upon this discipline of the spirit. Normally discipline is regarded as a fetter on freedom, but according to Rāmānuja, discipline and freedom are convertible terms and what we generally regard as freedom is the power of material pressure against disciplined life which alone can secure for men peace and happiness. This is the tradition of India. Prior to Rāmānuja the social benefits do not appear to have been quite extensive and pronounced, because men concentrated mostly on the *Varṇāśramadharma* and culture was the responsibility of the individual concerned. But with the spread of the *Drāviḍa Vedānta*, the emphasis on society came to be felt, not that the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* emerged then as the historians maintained, but the significance was felt during the period when the Dravida-Vedānta which contained the *Vedic* message began to spread.

The Response to the Initiative of Rāmānuja

The style that Rāmānuja adopted to get enlightened and his behaviour towards people after enlightenment brought out the

uniqueness of Rāmānuja's personality in respect of acquiring knowledge and applying it in a useful way. He would never quietly submit to a thought, however great may be the source of information, if the source would not provide adequately for the synthetic, objective and elevating background. This was manifestly clear in his attitude towards his former teacher Yādavaprakāśa who dealt with the problem of *Advaita*, and with one of his five *gurus* who gave him an interpretation of the *Drāviḍa Vedānta* according to which God permitted devotion to the Lord at an early stage in life and yet hurled him to be tossed about in the suffocating *Samādhāra*. When people of eminence, his equals and superiors with different convictions, moved towards him vowing allegiance to his way of outlook, Rāmānuja never permitted to himself the feeling that he was in any way, superior, or that they were now to be blessed by him. He merely treated them as his intimate companions belonging to the team dedicated to the service of the Lord.

This uniqueness attracted a number of great scholars from various communities. The communities included brahmins and non-brahmins, men and women alike. It is said by Amudanār in Tamil.⁵

"Palkalaiyōr tām manna vanda Irāmānuṣan"

Experts in various fields of knowledge preferred, close and lasting association with Rāmānuja.

*"Vārṇa dharmigaḷ, Dāśa vrthigaḷ"*⁶.

The Dāśa (servant) category ignores the privilege of the *Varṇa* (caste) category for recognition of claim and merit.

Their desire was not denied. The second point throwing light on the attitude of Rāmānuja is not based on the consideration of caste, sex or even *āśrama*, though they were not totally abjured as they were the *Vedic* prescription to preserve a certain social order among people struggling to lift themselves above ignorance and indiscipline. Amudanar observed—that Rāmānuja considered as his close kith and kin those persons—irrespective of caste or *āśrama* or sex.⁷

*"Araṅgan malar aḍikku āḷ urravārē
tanḱku uravar"*.

Not considering any other ambition, persons firmly devoted to serve at the feet of the Lord of Sriranga are taken as his inseparable associates.

The people banished from their mind and heart all thoughts and notions except being engaged whole-heartedly in service to the Supreme Lord whose Lordship is visible to the naked eye in the form of the presiding deity in Śrīraṅgam.

The main purpose of Rāmānuja was not mere service, but service with a particular attitude, an attitude in tune with the nature of the finite self in respect of the Supreme Self, whose sway over the finite self is in every way absolute. The large following that voluntarily came to Rāmānuja was struck by the vitality and nobility in life and daily practice of the philosophy which he inherited from the *Vedas* through the sources which were freely transmitting the message of true life as it intrinsically was without pollution or modification. That was the idea that Rāmānuja had in his mind whenever he thought in terms of tradition or *Sathpradāya*. The kernel of knowledge contained in what is known as the *Rahasya* or the *Upaṇiṣad* of the *Upaṇiṣad* was taught to people who approached him for enlightenment and leading a pure life. This he did after what may be called *Pañcasamśkāra*. With the knowledge of the structure of Reality and the purpose of life made known through this *Rahasya*, people had no mind to be led away by stray tempting thoughts. In a spirit of service they voluntarily made available all that they could for utilization under the doctrine of *tadtyārādhana* (Social Worship)—service with veneration for the *tadtyās*, those who feel the pulse of life as Rāmānuja has shown. This in a way started a system of social service economically. The temple became the centre of worship and feeding, and the gatherings in the temple were viewed as kinsmen in spiritual life. This combination to stay, must be repeated. The festivals and rituals arranged in the temples went a long way to stabilise the structure. It should however be remembered that the ritual and festive organizations in the temple were not the result of mere secular inspiration. Some specific pious act of an individual which could develop into a healthy principle to be kept in view was also an occasion for celebration. Thus it is that the *Tirunakṣatras*⁸ or the birth days of the Supreme seers and sages came to be observed to rouse gathering to a higher spirit in life. In the same way, treating of the *avatāras* of the Lord, some significant action of the Lord emphasising His protective disposition is celebrated too. In the same way there is a type of ritualistic festival in the temple known as *Brahmotsava* which is a performance of the divine initiation, in protecting the created world which could be observed with naked eye. This

is common in all the major temples. It is an annual occurrence. It is not of recent origin, nor a product of the prayer of a soul seeking salvation. This aspect of experience is contained in the text called *Āgamāsātra* which consists of two parts, namely, the *Vaikhānasa* and the *Pañcarātra*.

Thus the sole intention of Rāmānuja with regard to the society in which he found himself was not to teach his fellow beings the abstract philosophy, move them to meditation, seclusion and prefer detachment with an ulterior aim. He rather wanted people to live a full life by recognising the importance of the Ultimate Spirit, the individual spirit entirely dependent upon the Ultimate, the material body serving the finite mind and the atmosphere around to help and not to thwart true progress in life. Rāmānuja in his attempt proved himself to be an optimist and he did not believe in pessimism as others had before him. Pessimism is the result of disappointment with the world, because the world cannot be commanded to conform to our wishes. Rāmānuja emphasised that the *Aham* (Ego) in *Aham* must be scuttled. This is looking upon oneself as just like an other. There is only one 'Aham' and that is the ruling *Aham* which is God. With this feeling, passion and feelings cease to hold away over the mind and the variety around appears as something precious and unpolluting. He understood the doctrine of *Karma* prescribed in the Gīta this way⁹

"*Karmāṇi eva adhikāraṇte
Mā phaleṣu Kadācana
Mā Karma phale hetuḥ bhūḥ
Māte sangostu Akarmāṇi*"

You are entitled only to perform karma you have no right to think of its result in any case. Don't perform an act with a motive and never keep yourself aloof from karma.

Rāmānuja's role an Educationalist

Scholars gathered in good number and they were engaged in expounding the fundamental philosophy and in carrying on research ceaselessly to meet the evergrowing objections and novel constructions from the purely empirical point of view without taking into consideration the entire material furnished in the *Veda*. Thus the philosophy of Rāmānuja opposed all systems that failed to recognise the *Śeṣatve* of the ultimate 'Reality'. That was the burden of the *Bhāṣyakāra*.¹⁰

"Sarvasya Vastunaḥ
 Īśvara śarīratvena
 tat prakāra tayā eva
 Svarūpa—Śedbhāvaḥ
 Iti tat—prakāri
 Īśvaraḥ eva
 tat—tat Sabdena abhidhīyate"

Every created object mental or material has a right to existence only as the attribute of Īśvara—the source. Even the attributive expressions denote the substantive factor.

Scholars were posted at various centres of worship where people would frequently meet. Popular education and higher technical education were also provided for the benefit of people who preferred to know more and more. In a like way Rāmānuja engaged the services of seventy-four *Simhasanādīpatīs* (Sanctified nominees) called *ācāryapurushas*¹¹ and entrusted them with the duty of imparting the *Rahasya* of the *Vedāntic* thought conforming to prescription. They were also proficient in conducting discourses, discussions and disputations.

Donations and Contributions

Under the inspiration of Rāmānuja was formulated an administration perhaps initiated by Viṣṇuvardhana himself. With the efforts of the *sthānikas* of the Mēlukōṭe temple and the *ācāryapurushas* associated with the temple at Mēlukōṭe the chieftains, the well-to-do nobles, the common man came forward with rich offerings of villages, lands, jewellery and whatever could be spared by them to be pooled together for the maintenance of temple. The management was mostly with the temple *sthānikas*.

The mode of utilising the contribution was in strict conformity with the tradition of the ritual in the temple. To feed the visiting devotees and the resident devotees engaged themselves in various services not on a contract basis. No compulsion was recognised which would interfere with the freedom of the spirit of service in worship.

Even in the absence of the *sthānikas* and the *ācāryapurushas* on spiritual and administrative mission, their right to share was neither questioned nor denied. Inscriptional evidences are available in plenty from various source over a long period of time. Even during the regime of the Mahārājas of Mysore we find several

inscriptions and gifts, in addition to service strictly in conformity with the tradition that was obtaining in the temple. Even in the present day, devotees in possession of affluence are engaged in following the lead given by the *ācāryas*. If only the gifts and leases had been preserved intact over the centuries, the Mēlukōṭe temple would have been one of the richest temples of India which unfortunately it is not, because of circumstances beyond administrative control.

The Mite of the Ācāryapurnshas

Natives of Mēlukōṭe who belonged to the *ācāryapurusha* branches also contributed their mite in this direction by gathering a large body of *śiṣyas* from all communities in the state of Mysore. It may be mentioned in this connection that one Keśavācārya Swami celebrated for his connection with the *Tiruvāṁmoḷi*—the *Drāviḍavedānta* had a son by name Śrīnivasa. The boy, in his teens, under the inspiration of lord Narasimha of Ahobilam now in the Āndhra state, moved to Ahobilam. He was, to his surprise, led to the *āśrama* of *sanyāsa* under the name of Ādivaṇṣaṭhakops Swamin. Under him influence Śrī Krishnadevarāya the king of Vijayanagara wrote a book in Telugu under the name *Āmukta-Mālyada* in which he particularly celebrated his *guru*, the Mēlukōṭe ascetic, and offered many gifts to the deity at Mēlukōṭe.¹²

Subsequently the *śiṣyas* of the various *acharaya* purushas united to create institutions of their *ācāryas* for purposes of arranging temple worship and feeding the devotees on special occasions. The *sṭhanikas* also moved about and enlisted people belonging to the lay groups to make contributions to run the temple along the lines indicated by Rāmānuja.

Benefits

Rāmānuja struggled hard throughout the best part of his life to obtain a proper perspective of progressive life in the world. He included in his view the spiritual aspect of experience also. The spiritual aspect is the basic aspect which refers to the source of life. As a representative of traditional system of approach in solving the problems of the world, he relied mainly on the *Vedas*, the earliest cultural contribution to the problem of life. He also utilized the wisdom contained in the Tamil version of the *Vedic* treatment of life in its integrity. He adhered to the view that the fountain-source of knowledge was the true basis of development in thought and life.

Any violation or deviation would amount to mutilation and ultimately to the extinction of culture.

His belief was firm that the culture that he discovered helped in an equal measure all grades and sections of society. Most of the people may not be aware personally of the value of *Vedic* culture, but the course prescribed always helped a person to develop his personality to higher heights and refinement, indirectly compelling him to move from the narrow pursuit in life to a broader one. The process involved is one of merging in society as an integral part, instead of clinging to the individualistic aim and approach. It is here, according to Rāmānuja, that the message of the *Vedānta* assumes absolute importance.

The Doctrine of One Aim

The ground the goal of life are one and the same. They breathe the spirit of universalism. But the process or life from the ground to the goal displays a variety in which unity is seldom grasped. It is this lack of knowledge pertaining to unity as a homogenous body in which various parts co-operate without disturbing the unity, that marks the downfall of man. This unity, realized or understood, elevates a person to the status of the truly wise and saintly.

It is not given to every one to realize this truth. In society we find people with differing tastes and temperaments, ambitions and approaches, stressing the importance of one section as against another. We are taken from one condition to another ever dissatisfied with the existing condition.

Rāmānuja felt that the kind of life visualised by the wise may be followed by the ordinary people who in course of time may reap the advantage of becoming aware of the key to a healthy, happy, progressive and prosperous life. The struggle would be only to experience the gift in greater richness without disturbing the structure of society or interfering with the inherent individual capacity to make the necessary contribution.

The benefit to society, according to Rāmānuja, is of two kinds—first of all, Rāmānuja felt the need to remove distress and dependency members of the society. Secondly, he felt the need to give an educative bias to the system so that the people would not rest contented with the benefit they received, but would indulge in active habits which would help them to earn for themselves that they had formerly received as gifts. In the philosophy of Rāmānuja there is this classification into a *bhṛtya* (servant) and *bhokta* (enjoyer),

which he has borrowed from the Tamil section of the *Veda* (*Bhṛtya* is *Adīyār*)—responsible agent engaged in service and (*Tirivar*—the lazy vagarant keen on personal benefits).

The real intention of Rāmānuja in this field of consideration is to educate and elevate the *Tirivar* to the level of *Adīyār*—This is true democracy. This is the primary task of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja's determination in life in all its aspects has been, in an expression of his, dedication of *Katṅkarya*—service throughout life out of free will and with the greatest pleasure.¹³

"Anubhava—Janita—prīte—Karita

Aśeṣa—avastha—ucita

aśeṣa śeṣataika—ratī—rupa

Nitya—kinkaro bhavāni"

May I be the servant eternal which is ever enduring joy in the form of only *śesatva*, service in all forms suited to all conditions, brought about by the desire preceded by personal experience. Service itself is joy, not halted that is *Kain-Karya*.

The person at the second strata we come across is the normal human being who is uneducated. His intelligence is utilized to lead a happy life, employing the principle of give and take. It is co-operation based on the doctrine of selfishness not only in the person concerned but also in the neighbour. This selfishness operates in the field of co-operative enterprise. The need of the neighbour is as important as our own need. No one person produces all he wants. Therefore, exchange of goods that are needed and that can be spared was recognised to keep society undisturbed.

The doctrine of division of labour in a co-operative mood is the explanation of the caste system recognised in the Bhagavad-gītā.¹⁴

"Cātur Varṇyam maya śrṣṭam

Guṇa—karma—vibhāgaśaḥ."

The four-fold caste system is evolved by me the Supreme Lord, conforming to the distinct quality and work involved.

(The *Karma* theory is in its origin assignment of duty accompanied by suitable capacity to run society. It is, therefore, division of labour to maintain social unity undisturbed). To claim to deny the privileges attached to the four *varṇas* amounts to disturbing the natural social order.

Interference with this system is treated as *saṃkara* which tampers with the healthy structure of an organised body. Keeping in view 'guṇa and Karma' (attribute), ability and aptitude as the guiding factors, the emotional assessment of in-equality in the wings of society is the persisting pill of poison. In the language of Śrī Krishna, this *Samkara*, admixture, leads towards perdition of the people who make such inroads and also the groups that permit such inroads.

"Kula—jñānām kulasya ca"

This doctrine savours of religious and ritualistic touch in life. Whether the doctrines of *Karma* and Transmigration of Souls are admitted or not, society becomes an object of secular appreciation and the doctrine of division of labour on a co-operative basis holds good.

Decay

It would be improper to believe that the quality of the tradition introduced by Rāmānuja would remain unaffected under any circumstances. The role of the care-takers need not be over emphasised. After Rāmānuja, the scheme that was offered by him was followed with the best of intentions and ability by his disciples in the field of culture, administration and temple-worship. Vast offers and accumulations were made to implement the scheme of the *ācārya*, the founder of the Mēlukōṭe temple, keeping ever in mind the sanctity of the doctrine of service and the danger of self-projection. They were genuinely trustees of the Rāmānuja institution of *Vedāntic* life in and around the region of Mēlukōṭe.

As time passed, people were not strong enough to continue that tradition in its fullfledged form in the field of administration. Then came the power of the rulers of Mysore and the temple administrators were actually under the guidance of the rulers, but free to perform their duties which they inherited from the time of Rāmānuja. About the second half of the eighteenth century, strangely the spirit of co-operation among the *Śrīvaiṣṇavas* to the forces of conflict and self-interest in the field of administration. This started in the region now known as Tamil Nadu. And the followers of Rāmānuja indulged in attempts at aggression against custom and resistance to aggression. Administrative power was the only controlling agent since the cultural power lost its grip. Therefore, the matter went up in respect of various temples and institutions to the Law-Courts which

would not entertain settlement of disputes except on the basis of custom and evidence. Charged with bias to secure victory in a partisan spirit, time, wealth and energy were mostly diverted towards settling this feud. It is indeed a social tragedy and cultural suicide that such occasions should have been welcomed and nourished. But in religion the fountain-head being pure the source came to be recognised, and upheld against forces of innovation and alteration. In proof of this, judgements of several high courts in Tamil Nadu and even the Judgements of the Privy Council prior to Indian Independence have upheld the sanctity of custom against variations urged by the impulse of aggression.¹⁵

Putting the problem in a simple way, the dispute is between the two schools—*Tengalai* Vs. *Vaḍagalai* in respect of *Nāmam* or *punḍra* or the mark on the forehead or the *pātram* or the laudatory hymn at the beginning and the end of worship, and the *ācāryas* projected to represent the two schools.

Following the scheme of Rāmānuja in Mēlukōṭe which he supervised personally during his stay, arrangements were made to add economic and other types of wealth to the temple. The management in the temple was shared by the fifty-two beloved followers of Rāmānuja. One of them appears to have taken *sanyāsa* and lived where Rāmānuja had lived. That probably explains the birth of *Yatirāja Matha* at Mēlukōṭe.¹⁶ It has been continuing as a *Tengalai Math*, with the subjects of the *pūrvā śikhis*, the *Kiḷnāṭṭass* and the *Mandayams* representing the *Matha*. In a dispute between the present *parakāla math* at Mysore and *Yatirāja Math* at Mēlukōṭe in what has come to be known as the *tiriha* case, the authorised representatives of *Yatirāj Math* are reported to have observed that the *Mandayam* entry to the *Yatirāj Math Gādi* was from year 1850 and that prior to that the line belonged to the *Kiḷnāṭṭan* and the present stone image of the *sanyāsin* in the *Yatirāj Math* was the image of a *pūrvā śikhi*, representative of the fifty-two followers of Rāmānuja.

In this connection, four *ācāryapurushas* have been recorded as having come from the time of Rāmānuja styled as *Śihajācārya purushas* to carry out the cultural mission of the *ācārya* in the region of Mysore. They were to direct the recitals of the sacred hymns in the temples as representatives of Rāmānuja who represented the three other superiors, namely *Viśvaksena* Parāṅkusa and the *parakāla*. At the time of Mangla or closing of morning worship, the said *śhalaācārya purushas* were privileged to receive the *pañcamudra* garland *parivaṭṭa*, three spoons of tirtha (holy water) and prasāde, soon after

the same were offered to the three iconic *ācāryas* daily. This was the spiritual bounty of the divine and that has been continuing even today. In money value in modern times they may count for nothing or the priority may not be respected and emphasised. But on the spiritual basis the sanctity of custom is completely destroyed by certain changes and modifications introduced in support of personal prestige under money power and political voice. If the doctrine of adjustment according to times is encouraged, the sacred value attached to the time-honoured custom based on tradition with a super secular basis is seriously affected. The behaviour of modern votaries under this section projects the picture of pollution of values, under the pressure of adjustment, which has introduced split and bickerings in the group.

The guiding principle in life is to guard against 'exclusion'. The human organism cannot afford to ignore the element which holds the parts together and keeps them functioning. On this analogy, it is apartheid to neglect the basic structure of society. Once the agent of apartheid one cannot avoid being its victim. With apartheid as a guiding principle, society cannot be said to exist and function.

Great men who appear on the scene of the world have left behind them impressions which would help mankind to prosper in life. The impressions are remembered and utilized from various points of view. The utility might not have been intended by the great men but their life does contain material worthy of attention in various walks of life.

We are indivisible members of society. To possess a calm and undisturbed mind is the fruit of the advice of the great leaders.

The glory of Rāmānuja is that he deeply thought of society and its welfare and remembered equally that he could not disconnect himself from society. It appeared to him that segregation meant abstraction which amounted to distortion of reality. For Rāmānuja service to society appeared paramount. What he wanted was to console society and to keep it in comfort, to promote its natural wants and aspirations, whatever they be. A great person would be truly great, respected and welcome if he could be assiduously instrumental to the fulfilment of the social craving as it arises at different times. This kind of social service, though it was necessary, did not appeal to Rāmānuja. He would be a disappointment to those who expected contribution from him to keep the current of complicated social life going.

The stream of society would be worth its name only when it moves in the direction of prosperity, eliminating the evil and developing the good of the entire social society. If the latter aspect becomes. The dominant note of social progress, the surest way and perhaps the most welcome thing is to find out the remedy for the evil and the healing herb to preserve the health of society. It would be, therefore, the principle of regulation in social life that would keep down the storm of discontent, disorder and deterioration. To put it in a language that may be paradoxical 'freedom' is elimination of 'licence'. Freedom implies self-restraint which is regulated life, a necessity for a person in society. Licence is ignorance of the dignity of freedom. It may be termed as idle activity which is the surest way towards disintegration and ultimately destruction of society.

Social unity and harmony can best be realised and preserved only when the mind is kept clear and when the members of society permit their free will to possess such a clear mind. This would be again paradoxical. It would be competition among members in the co-operative effort to maintain social unity. In other words, narrow-minded selfishness is the permanent venom which would work against the health of society. To serve society to arrest the growth of decay from the human to the sub-human is service in the negative sense, far it is only helping the flow of life without harnessing it for better purpose, namely the super-human life.

It is from the point of view, the message of Rāmānuja to mankind becomes invaluable as it emphasised, on unity, anti-individualism called '*apṛthak-siddhi*' objectivity, *vathartha*, persuasion, opening the eyes to reality, non-persecution and non-dictatorship, the policy of control through material might. The most important of all is sympathy for the suffering, *anukampa* or compassion, the sole motive of which is to elevate them to the highest level not by magic but by the normal process of development. Such a course would possibly help society to maintain itself against periodic disturbances, the root cause of which is the ignorance of social order and the uncontrolled operation of caprice. Therefore, Rāmānuja felt the best way was to help society to realize the solid fact that no man is inferior to another and equally no man is identical with another. society is a complex of varying individuals, each controlled under the central direction of the unit which holds the individuals together.

The aim of social service is not limited to meet only the needs of bed and bread in life, but to regulate a habit of utilising the bread

and bed in a healthy way.

This aim calls for discretion and discipline which is regulated life. Regulation is not an imposition from outside, but a development from within involving education and enlightenment in place of threat and punishment. A band of workers or *ācāryapurushas* is a necessity. They are the enlightened functionaries in the service to preserve regulation.

The climax of social service is to find a place in society which has reaped the full benefit of regulated life. That is the aim of Rāmānuja. Success or failure is not entirely in the hands of an individual. Success is possible only when full co-operation exists between the director, the administrator and the participant.

Rāmānuja might not be successful in meeting to the full the wish of every member according to his taste and temperament, but he does meet the need of every one unfailingly by instilling in his mind the concept of unity, the reality of variety and the need for a regulated way of life which would be regarded as a healthy, varied manifestation of one single unity, namely, society. His main ambition in life was to help mankind, to dive into the depths to lift mankind. This is his principle of not losing the personal self, while giving a helping hand to others to come out of the mire of misery and confusion. Rāmānuja's conception of social philosophy was to form a happy, prosperous society and his conviction was that improvement was inherent in every individual constituting the society and the only way to prosperity was to develop that inherent power without any grafting, for grafting does not introduce a superior quality.

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3. *Bhagavad-gīta* : III, verse 11.
4. Rāmānuja : *Gīta Bhāṣya*, III, 11.
5. Amudanār : *Rāmānuja Muṇḍāḍi*, verse 1.
6. Cf. Nāyyanār : *Ācārya Hrdaya*, Sūtra 32.
7. Amudanār : *Rāmānuja Nūṇḍāḍi*, verse 57.
8. *Epigraphia Carnatica* : Vol. VI, Ins. No. Mēlukōṭe 149.
9. *Bhagavad-gīta* : Ch. II, verse 47.
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CHAPTER XI

Conclusion

We have now come to the end of the study of "The Impact of Rāmānuja's Teaching on Life and Conditions in Society". The following conclusions emerge from our study.

1. The society of which human beings are members has for them different kinds of promise and opportunity. Variation in kind and quality could not be denied or brushed aside. But the one aim of all beings is to have the best in life. Socialism as a science is an attempt to help human beings to reach their Supreme goal by keeping under check the inequality which is responsible for strife and despair.

Among the great *Vedāntins* of the past in India, Rāmānuja evinced his interest in this field of experience. His ambition was the welfare of the masses. According to him, outside society man has no place to live and act. The benefit of the *Vedānta* teaching was made available to the masses and a 'World Within the World' was introduced in which men could live and function with joy and contentment. It is just a change of attitude towards life. The aim is not to run away from the world, but to plant paradise on earth.

His choice of the nomenclature, *Śrīvaiṣṇava*, establishes the fraternity of one and all in society. He, therefore, regarded the caste structure as preliminary equipment to meet the needs of *Srīvaiṣṇavism*. This attitude gave Rāmānuja a status as a great social reformer. He evaluated all aspects of social life and evolved a system in which the prevailing principle was harmony and co-operation.

2. The life-carer of Rāmānuja describes his dissatisfaction with the predecessors in the field of the *Vedānta* who failed to present the world order in proper perspective. Exclusion of a relevant part in evaluating experience in its entirety seemed to him an act of butchery. Co-ordination could not be ignored. Rejection of any part could not be condoned. With this view Rāmānuja turned to the world phenomenon and presented the world as a home of

happiness, though not durable and unsullied. This outlook of Rāmānuja urged him to lift society from the condition of gloom to a state of charm and glow.

3. The view that society consists of varying types of men and customs does not deserve to be misunderstood. Generally the groups may be regarded as advanced or backward, giving rise to the feeling of inequality which cannot be overcome. According to Rāmānuja, in a co-operative attempt with the background of harmony as guiding factor, charity and sympathy are allowed to maintain unity and affection.

4. The conflict that emerges very often in society should be confined to a different field. Conflict ought not to be between different factions. The conflict must be between self-interest and social interest. The aim is social interest which provides for personal interest also as an integral part of society. The struggle should be against personal interest at the expense of social interest. In other words, an individual belonging to society shall not permit himself to think of personal interest and welfare as more important than the interest and welfare of society of which he forms a part. Man is expected to serve society not keeping aloof, but with the conviction that he is an inescapable member of society.

5. Strict vigil is essential to maintain the harmonious condition of society. Factors of greed and glamour often upset the normal order of society. They deserve to be kept under check by providing for education, and for prevention in the event of education proving ineffective.

6. The socialistic outlook attracted people who gathered around Rāmānuja. The caste system as practised by the *r̥sis* of the *Vedic* times appeared with a larger content. It was no longer a means to preserve purity and efficiency for personal gain. It was looked upon as a vital equipment to serve society from different aspects of life. The service motive was emphasised by Rāmānuja.

7. Religious experience helps mankind to an awareness that man is but a small speck in the social organism. The ritual or the practice in life is a continuation of that view all through life. Aggression and arrogance will appear when the religious spirit and the ritualistic behaviour are ignored. Religious experience should not be built on fancies and possibilities. The experience must be realistic and objective.

In order to spread this point of view in life persistent attempts must be made to keep the truth shining and to refute whatever

experience, in the name of religion, obliterates the form and power of true religion. This task is assigned to great scholars. Their works reveal their attempt to preserve this sublime aspect of experience. Likewise, to feed the masses with the elixir of religious experience popular treatise are introduced providing for grasping the truth without much strain on the part of the masses. The rituals arranged in the temples reflect the practice of religion together in company, an event or an opportunity reminding mankind that society is a homogeneous organism. Humility, devotion, sympathy and affection are the main traits that mark the gathering in the temple. This is the social value of gathering in the temple for worship and rituals.

8. Administration is the method of enlisting members to function in a way to maintain the spirit and structure of society unhampered. Discipline is a necessary element in the field of co-operation. The discipline is limited to keep harmony undisturbed. No member who form part of society can afford to ignore discipline. Freedom is arrested when discipline is enforced. But if discipline is ignored, freedom loses its value. Therefore, discipline deserves to be enforced by practising self-restraint which is considered the best behaviour. The Sanskrit term *Vinayna* (Humility) is *Vīṣṭānaya*—the best behaviour. That is freedom, namely, not being controlled by abnormalities. The administrator is a successful guardian only when he personally observes *Vinaya*. The paradoxical expression—'restraint is freedom' deserves to be remembered particularly in the field of administration.

The administrative style that Rāmānuja visualized could be observed in the region of the Karnāṭaka. Rāmānuja resorted to Mēlukōṭe (Tirunārāyanapuram, Yādavagiri and Yatisāila as the place is known) from Śrīrangam and stayed for twelve years. Under his influence the Hoysaḷa King Vishnuvardhna accepted the direction of the *ācārya* and stated a system of administration which is in vogue as far as the temple is concerned even to day.

The system introduced in Mēlukōṭe by Rāmānuja is markedly distinct. The *Pañchamas* and others are drawn into the group under the doctrine of co-operation with a single purpose in view. The gathering was based on the policy of persuasion and not persecution in the interest of solidarity.

To look after the welfare of the masses in the temple, which is society in a miniature form—Rāmānuja included worshippers and scholars, to preserve the religious and the ritual side of experience

and the wealthy to pool resources and the labourers to assist in the pooling. In brief, it was a combined effort to establish the store house of supply to meet the needs of the people.

9. The individual has a right to exist and reach to the heights of his ambition in life. Being a social member he expects the environment to be helpful and agreeable. This attitude introduces a distinction between the receiving party and the providing party. Service as the term loosely understood, is the help a person receives from other for his benefit. The structure of society never subjects any individual to utter neglect. That is the instinct of service towards an individual introduced by nature. This type of service springs out of sympathy. True service is a projection of this instinct with the knowledge that the individual has an inherent privilege to be wished well by other members of society in thought, word and deed without thinking of himself as the recipient of benefit. Expectations may not be realised, but service habit is innate and cannot be ignored. Service is an indication of the value of life to promote the interest of society as a whole. Behaviour in the larger interest is preferred to behaviour in selfish interest.

Service in its pure form is obligation, contribution of one's mite to the group out of free will and from the section a person occupies in the sphere of society.

10. Praiseworthy may be the system of social order propounded by Rāmānuja, it is hard to continue the tradition without allowing for lapses. The influence of the spirit of *Kali*, the power of disorder cannot be always halted. Values change upsetting the equilibrium of life and society. Ups and down there are in individuals as well as in society. Human instinct readily yields to temptations which affect the true value of life. Clouded ambitions corrupt man's conduct. It is natural that the truly normal suffers a setback and degenerates into the sub-normal.

When the regulated walk of life of the highest order cannot be maintained, it is desirable as well as necessary to be aware of the glory of enlightened life and to strive to regain and retain it. In such a set-up, the group becomes a minor part of society, trying to remind the masses of the need to revert to the standard way of running society. The group, therefore, becomes an advisory body hoping that its view would command the attention and respect so that life in the world would be an occasion for contentment and happiness for every one. Performance in times of unbridled adversity takes the form of prayer and pious wish.

In the post-Rāmānuja period, the custodians of Rāmānuja's culture feared that the system of Rāmānuja might be affected and toned down in vigour as time moved on. Therefore, they introduced a form of prayer at the conclusion of worship in the temple which contained the spirit with which Rāmānuja introduced the system and a burning desire that the system according to his command might continue, spread and cover the whole of society.

The prayer is condensed in the following verses—

*"Sarva-dāśa-dāśā-kāleṣu
a-vyāhata-parākrama
Rāmānujārya-divyajña
Varadhatām-abhi-varadhatām
Rāmānujārya-divyajña
Prati-vasaram-ujjala
Dignata-vyapinī-bhūyāt
Sāhi-loka-hitai-ṣiṇi".*

In all regions, conditions and times the progressive nature not being hindered, the sacred mandate of Rāmānuja may keep its vigour and develop it every wise. The sacred mandate of Rāmānuja daily gathering fresh glow, may spread in all directions—that mandate undeniably is directed towards the well-being of the world. This prayer serves as a caution against lapses brought about by lethargy and indifferences.

Appendices

I

The selected epigraphical evidence pertaining to this work are included in the appendix to show that the intention and the direction of Rāmānuja, the propagator of the socialist *Vedānta* have been carried out in all devotion and sincerity during later times.

The inscriptional evidence also throws light on how the organisation has yielded in quality to the environmental pressures from time to time. Epigraphia Carnatica, Vol. V, Pt. I, Bl. 58 of A.D. 1117, on the inner-wall of the treasury of the Chennakēśava temple. Obeisance to Kēśava and Śiva. Usual account, in verse, of the rise of the Yedukula and the Poysala (omitting mere laudations). The Konkanigas, saying his sword will destroy us all, scattered in every direction, when Vinayaditya set forth for war. The sons of the hill Kings, rubbing their heads, rose up, came and placed their heads at his lotus feet. His wife was Keleyabba. Their son was Eregāṅga, Dhora, the chief city of the powerful Māḷava Kings, which Bhoja by victory over hostile kings had enlarged and made famous, he took as if the preliminary sip (apohana) before feasting on the world of his enemies. So that the smoke blinded the eyes of the regents at the points of the compass, caused the white regent elephants to appear black, and filled the whole sky with a dense cloud. Poysala burnt all Bhoja's principal fortresses. The dust raised by his army, coming down on the hills mingled with the clouds, and as he marched on burning all the encountered, it was as if he were unfurling a banner of smoke from Bhoja's destruction, such was the effect of Poysala's victorious expedition, what heroes were equal to him? The burning of Baleya—Paṭṭana on the sea-shore by the flames of king Eregangas anger, brought to mind the appearance of the waves of the sea when consumed by Rāma's fiery arrow. His wife was Echaladēvi. They had three sons—Ballala, Viṣṇu and Udayāditya.

With their swords beating down without mercy the pride of Paṇḍya, who in his pride withstood them, the princes Viṣṇu and Ballāla seized the wealth of his kingdom;—were they ordinary men? In Dorasamudra they defeated the army of Jagadeva, painted the Goddess of victory with the blood of his elephants for vermilion, and captured his treasury together with the central ornament of his

necklace;—who could deny the valour of those princes ? Devoted to the worship of Mahesa, the Goddess of victory his wife, the earth, the group of his dependents, relations by marriage, his equals, his fame throughout the Brahmāṇḍa (pure as the milk in the cocoa-nut) his treasure—the king Baḷḷala was praised in all the earth for his greatness.

Victorious is Vishnu Deva, all the world at his feet, delighting in the conversation of the clever and learned, fond in his heart of all dancing, favourite of the Goddess of fortune. Ever engaged in business, devoted to the worship of purushottama,—in government, in making, gifts in distributing rewards, the king's hand was a wonder, his acts displaying both severity and gentleness. When he set out on an expedition of victory to the west, the enemy was covered up with the dust raised by his army, the sea was dried up, and the king of the waters came and offered him jewels as tribute. First taking into his arms the wealth of the Poysaḷa kingdom which was his inheritance, as his power increased, he brought all the points of the compass under his command, and capturing Talakāḍu, became the first to the Ganga kingdom,—this promoter of the Yadu-varṇa, the king Viṣṇu. The Goddess of Fortune reposing unmoved in his arms, so that his fortune should increase, he burnt the chief city of the Gangas,—the mighty Vishnu, named Bhujabala—Ganga, behold in order that Rajendra-chola, disgusted at the water of the Kaveri, suddenly becoming polluted, should be driven to the use of water from wells in the vicinity Vishnu by the power of his arm threw all the corpses of his army into the stream of the river, and caused his valour to shine forth. Kubera, why is the south wind delayed ? Why has it not set in yet ? It has been stopped by filling the nostrils of the skulls of the enemies slain in king Vishnu's expeditions of victory on the banks of the Kaveri. His fame spread abroad over the ocean says to (mount) Mainaka, 'Do not, alas, remain fixed in the ocean like a water-bird; there is no longer any fear for Indra; my Lord will protect you, the victorious king Vishnu's Java (Yama) was afraid to straighten his moustaches, the sign of his manhood ; those who fell at his feet were afraid of dulling by their breath the brilliance of his toe nails, the proud were afraid to look on him for fear of being consumed in his brightness; —such was the glory of the valour of the king Vishnu.

When, (with) usual titles, and many other epithets, among which are), causing the earth to tremble with the tramp of his Kāmbhoja horse, Lord of Gandagiri, an untimely discuss in splitting the great

rock Pāṇḍya, bursting the hearts of the Tulu kings in the game of war, a Bhairava in destroying the army of Jagaddēva, a powerful lion in devouring the fierce elephant someśvara, displaying his valour before Manikya-devi of the Chakrakūṭa throne, skilled with his bow in reducing the pride of Adiyama, a gale in overturning the tree Narasimha-brahma, gratifying the Yogins with draughts of blood out of the skull of Kalapala (or king Kala), his sword a royal kite to destroy the serpent chengiri, rāja of the Mala-rajās, a mighty elephant in breaking through the plantain stems the spears of Irungola, a vainya in shaking with his bow the mountain chengiri—perumāla, having set up with his own army. Patti-perumāla, having made his own Talakad, having taken the Kongu country, having protected Nolambavadi, having expanded Nila-parvata, having extended Kolala-Pura, having uprooted Kovatūr, having Shaken Teriyūr, having crossed over Vallur, having made Kancipura tremble, champion over the hill-chiefs, an intoxicated royal swan sporting in the woods on the banks of the Kaveri,—Śrīmat Tribhuvanamalla, the strong armed Vīra—Ganga Vishnuvardhana—Poysalēva was protecting by the Barakanur and other ghats of Konkana, north by Savimāla.

And when, united with the sharer in a thousand delights (omitting mere laudations) a Kamala born in the milk-ocean of Balipura, receiver of a boon from the God Dharmmesvara, having erected the Rāmēśvara temple of Isapura, a jewelled lamp in the house of the Bharatagama (or science of music), the cluster of the nails of whose feet were revered by crowds of beautiful girls with long hanging tresses, a head jewel in all manner of dancing, a Sarasvati in singing, a rutting elephant to co-wives—the senior queen, the crowned consort Śantaladēvi—Vishnuvardhana—Poysalēva was in his residence in the great city of Velāpura, ruling the kingdom in peace and wisdom—he set up with faith the God Vijaya-Nārāyaṇa, called Chenna (described) with an immense number of opithers, and (on the date specified), to provide for the daily ceremonies, the decorations, and the offerings at the three times, to the Gods Vijaya-Nārāyaṇa, Chenna-kēśava and Lakshmi Nārāyaṇa and for the livelihood of the Srivaiṣṇava Brahmanas, of the dancing girls, the putters on the vestments, the learned men, the garland-makers, the lighters of the lamps and all the attendants, he made grants of villages (as specific). Whatever surplus income may accrue, to be devoted to offerings to the faithful and to temple repairs. Thus

was it ordered by the eleventh incarnation, Vishnuvardhana Hoysaḷa—Deva (Impercations).

(2) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI (ed.) B.R. Gopal, Tonnūr, 55.

On the Jagati of the Vahanamantapa in the Tonnūr Temple.

“Be it wellthe Mahājanas ofrvedimangalam (assigned) land for 42 (as vritti)Of Rāmānuja-matham at.....kadappu.. ... of the gali-gopuram.. ...the holding gave.....”.

(3) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Mēlukōṭe 137.

To the left of the new door-way set up in the northern Prakara well.

“May it be auspicious, obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja. While the illustrious.....Krishnadevamāharāya was ruling the Kingdom on earth, on.....of Salivahana Saka year worshippers of the divine lotus feet of God Sampatkara Nārāyaṇa-dēva of (Tirunā) rāyānapura which is the abode of the eternal God, a Vaikunṭha on earth, holy place which is an extension of Vaikunṭha.establisher of....., a Graṇḍa with no discomfiture, establisher of vedic religion, Rāmānuja.....the sale deed granted to Rāmānujayyangaṅgar is as follows .

As.....to God Shelapilerāya, the details of the service are as follows :

For feeding daily the Śrīvaiṣṇavas.....we have sold from the treasury.....to you. Hence these two plates of offered food..... as we have received in full.....to this two kulas of rice, two plates of offered foodin succession of the disciples for as long as moon and sun endure, the Rāmānuja-kūṭa. To this effect is the writing of Rāmānuja, the Senabova of the treasury”.

(4) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Mēlukōṭe 182.

Stone paved into the floor of the Yatirāja Matha

“Obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja on Thursday, the 12th day of the bright fortnight of Margasira, in the year Nala, by the order of God Nārāyaṇadēva who has settled in the holy place which is the extension of Vaikunṭha, the fifty-two and Ketiyappa-setti who is Aḷagiyamaḷavāladāsa, son of Chenapasetti of Terakanāmbi granted for Rāmānujakūṭa the villages.....Vanahall and Kamarasana-pura—thus, two villages and 5 Kha. of wet land in Harahina Ketahali—all thesehaving obtained.....four.....Śrīvaiṣṇavas will maintain amadursana-kāṭṭale before Bhāshyakāra. Thus is the stone charter got written”.

(5) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI. Mēlukoṭe 185.

Stone set up to the North-West of the Garuda Temple in the Nāmadakatte Garden

“On Monday, the 1st day of the bright fortnight of Ashadha, in the year sidhārtha, Immadi-Ravuttarāya Madappa—dannāyaka, son of Immadi Ravuttarāya Perumāludēva—dannāyaka of Heḍatale, made over the title of land noticed by Emberumānar as *tirumanam* (holy earth) to God Tirimanna-Perumāl as a charity good fortune”.

II

(1) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. V, BL. 58 (See Appendix—I)

(2) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Mēlukoṭe, 132 on the Narayaṇa Temple.

“May it be auspicious obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja. While the illustrious mahārājādhirāja, rājaparamēśvara Lord of the east, south and western oceans, Vīrapratāpa Sadaśivadeva mahārāya was ruling the empire on earth, on the 2nd day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra, in the year Pramoduta, of the Śalivāhana Śaka year 1492, the Fifty two (Ayivattibbar) Ayyas, first disciples of Rāmānujacharya, worshipper of the celebrated lotus feet of God Sampatkumara Nārāyaṇa of Tirunārāyanapura which is Yādavagiri, the illustrious abode of the eternal God, a Vaikuntha on earth, an increasing holy place, a pavilion of knowledge, otherwise called the Southern Badarikāśrama, an uproar to the expunders of Māyāvāda, a terror to conjurers, an adamantive cage to refugees, establisher of the six recognised systems of philosophy, a Garuda having no discomfiture, establisher of the Vedic religion, granted to the stone charter to Rayapa-nāyaka, son of Kondama-nāyaka, punisher of the army of elephants, rayagovala, founder of the Kakiva kingdom, a Sultan among Hindu rulers. Velugoḍa-chitra, as follows—previously, your ancestor Vasantaraya had granted the villages, Nailauahali, a hamlet of Mēlukote and.....Purada-grama and its hamlet, which he had purchased from the treasury (of the temple) the income of cash and grains of which was to be utilised as follows : half of it for feeding in Rāmānujakuta appear offering to the God and out of the other half, deducting 3/4 for the perpetual

lamp, the remaining 1/4 was for *Yajamānāmsa* (the share of the head of household) which belonged to Anantayya, the *dharmakarta* appointed by your (ancestor) Vasantarāya. He was also enjoying 2 Kha. of wet land below the tank of Bharatapura. While this was so, owing to invasion or natural calamity (*rajika—caivika*) only the *bidutaka* (services) was being continued. Hence you having ordered, though Jalela Rangapatirajaiyya that the old practice should be continued, that old practice that we (now) maintain is as follows :

From the income of cash and grains from that village for... .. after the offering to God.....after deducting 3/4 of the income of the Sthāna (Sthāna-prāpti) for perpetual lamp, the remaining 1/4 will be paid to Ālvāru Singayya, your *dharmakarta* grandson of Anantayya whom Vasantarāya had appointed, in succession of sons and grandsons, for as long as moon and sun endure..... and also we maintain (grant of) 2 Kha. of wet land below the tank of Vasantapura to him. Thus is granted the stone charta, on your own accord. All the wet and dry lands gardens, vegetable gardens, threshing—floor, house, farmers, dams, arable landseight rights and powers of enjoyment including treasure on the surface or underground, water springs, minerals, imperishables, futures.....ready income and possibilities will be maintained to Ālvāra Singayya.

If any one fails to maintain we shall set right. Whoever violates this charity is one who violates the feet of Rāmānujacharya Rāmānuja, the Senabova of the treasury wrote, signature of the fifty-two Ayyas. Śrī Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Nārāyaṇa.

(3) *Eptgraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Mēlukōṭe 137 (See Appendix—1)

(4) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Bl. 58 (See Appendix—I)

(5) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Tonnūr 55, (See Appendix—1)

(6) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Mēlukōṭe 213 on the top of the rock in Mudi-beṭṭa near the town.

“May it be auspicious, obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja. This is the service of the flower garden rendered by the illustrious mahāmandalēśwara Rāmārājayyadeva and Vabayamma to God Nārāyaṇa, on the 5th day of the dark fortnight of Vaisakha, in the year Viṣṇu”.

(7) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Mēlukōṭe 161 on the wall of the big kitchen of the *Nārāyaṇa Temple*.

“Be it well. While.....Pratāpa Chakravarti Hoysaḷa Vīrabaḷḷadēva was ruling the kingdom on earth, the illustrious Mahāpra-

dhāna, champion over adulterers, conquerer of Nilagiri, a marito Kongas, soatterer of Visalamudre, modakoleya, Immadi Rahutarāya of Eḍatale, Perumāḷe-dannāyaka's son Madappa-dannāyaka and Ketappa-dannāyaka granted one wet land of 10 kolagas below Kulavanahala stream in their place to Lakshmaṇadāsa who enjoying it, will supply 15 gula of eleyatti (cardomon) to God Tīrunārāyaṇa of Mēlugote for as long as moon and sun endure. God fortune”.

Glossary

<i>Apr̥thak-Siddhi</i>	: Inseparable existence, Integral
<i>Ananyatva</i>	: Non co-ordinate status
<i>Antar-Jvara</i>	: The lurking fever
<i>Ālvārs</i>	: Saints
<i>Ācāryas</i>	: The leading agent in life, seers
<i>Agrahāras</i>	: Brahmana settlement
<i>Āśramas</i>	: Stages
<i>Aham</i>	: Ego
<i>Atithi</i>	: Guest
<i>A-cetana</i>	: Non mental
<i>Adiyan</i>	: An entity engaged in service
<i>Akṣiṇi</i>	: Eyes
<i>Ātma-Śīla</i>	: Power of character
<i>Ācāra</i>	: Habit
<i>Ādambara</i>	: Self-aggrandisement
<i>Avatāras</i>	: Incarnation
<i>Ātman</i>	: Soul
<i>Adīyār</i>	: Followers, the responsible
<i>Āgama</i>	: The treatise dealing with the ritual of worship
<i>Ānādi</i>	: Beginningless
<i>Āṇḍar</i>	: Men with material interest
<i>Anukampa</i>	: Compassion
<i>Ācārya Puruṣhas</i>	: Cultural Custodians
<i>Adhyāpāna</i>	: Teaching
<i>Asura</i>	: Who interferes
<i>Alḥum</i>	: Draw
<i>Ariyars</i>	: The chief
<i>Akshara</i>	: Syllable
<i>Aṣṭhakṣari</i>	: Octo-syllabic term
<i>Archakas</i>	: Worshippers
<i>Abhinaya</i>	: Dancing
<i>Adhayayana</i>	: Learning

<i>Bhagavān</i>	: Source of life
<i>Bhakta-Samāgama</i>	: Association with the wise
<i>Bhakti</i>	: Devotion
<i>Bhahiṣkara</i>	: Excommunication
<i>Bhujājitah</i>	: Utilize
<i>Brahmotsava</i>	: Ritualistic festival in the temple
<i>Brahmacārīn</i>	: Bachelore
<i>Bhṛtya</i>	: Adiyar, Servant
<i>Bheda</i>	: Distinction
<i>Bhāṣya</i>	: Treatise
<i>Brahmamedha-Samskāra</i>	: The method of disposing the earthly remains of the philosopher
<i>Brahman</i>	: The biggest
<i>Bhāgavata</i>	: Devotee
<i>Bhokta</i>	: Enjoyer
<i>Chaturkshari</i>	: Quadro-syllabic term
<i>Cetana</i>	: Soul
<i>Chakra</i>	: Discus
<i>Dīvyadēśas</i>	: Holy places
<i>Dhīh-lab-Dhā</i>	: Knowledge is obtained
<i>Dharmo-naṣṭaḥ</i>	: Rhighteousness slipped out of reach
<i>Dana-</i>	: Gifts
<i>Draviḍa-Veda</i>	: The store house of knowledge recorded in the Tamil language
<i>Droṇa</i>	: A measure used in measuring the food grains
<i>Dharma</i>	: Rhiteousness
<i>Dīvyacakṣus</i>	: The divine eye
<i>Dāśya</i>	: Service prompted by love
<i>Dāsa</i>	: Servant
<i>Dēva</i>	: Who co-operates
<i>Dāsiputra</i>	: The son of a maid servant
<i>Ekāntins</i>	: Persons who did not waver in their minds
<i>Gadya</i>	: Prose
<i>Gṛhastha</i>	: House-holder
<i>Guru</i>	: Teacher, preceptor
<i>Guṇa</i>	: Attribute, Virtue
<i>Griha</i>	: House

<i>Nitya-grantha</i>	: A guide book of daily worship
<i>Niskāma Karma</i>	: An activity untarnished by narrow motives and attractions
<i>Nāśa</i>	: Destruction
<i>Nivṛttarāga</i>	: A person who does not succumb to passions and temptations
<i>Nitya Karma</i>	: Daily duty
<i>Nanda Vanams</i>	: Flower gardens
<i>Pañcabhūtas</i>	: Five elements
<i>Pāpa</i>	: Sin
<i>Paṅgu</i>	: Lameness
<i>Pāṭhak</i>	: Reader
<i>Pavam Śaidanadām</i>	: Committed sins
<i>Pratigraha</i>	: Receiving
<i>Phala</i>	: Result
<i>Punya</i>	: Merit
<i>Parama yogin</i>	: The greatest associate capable of controlling the maladies pertaining society
<i>Pañcarātra</i>	: System of temple worship sponsored by Visnu
<i>Pāda-Cchaya</i>	: Shadow of the feet
<i>Pṛthak</i>	: Piece meal
<i>Pañca Samskāra</i>	: The five fold efficacies
<i>Pātram</i>	: Laudatory hymn at the beginning and at the end of worship
<i>Panchamas</i>	: The unspecified class as distinguished from the four specified classes
<i>Parivaṭṭa</i>	: Turban
<i>Prapanna</i>	: One who does not work for a personal gain
<i>Para Samṛdhi</i>	: Benefit to the neighbour
<i>Parichāraka</i>	: Servant
<i>Prapattih</i>	: Surrender, Release
<i>Puṇḍarika</i>	: The white lotus
<i>Puṇḍra</i>	: Two white lines on the fore-head, with a red line of powder suffer on
<i>Prakṛti</i>	: Nature, Environment
<i>Pala</i>	: Fruit

<i>Rahasya</i>	: Inner thought
<i>Ṛsis</i>	: Seers
<i>R̥ṇa</i>	: Debt
<i>Rajas</i>	: Passion
<i>Samasrayana</i>	: Branding ceremony
<i>Sanyāsin</i>	: Ascetic
<i>Sankara</i>	: Adulteration
<i>Sūtras</i>	: Aphorisms
<i>Samanwaya</i>	: The Supreme pursuit
<i>Śarīrātmanabhāva</i>	: The body-mind-kinship
<i>Śiṣya</i>	: Disciple
<i>Śāstraiikatva-Siddhiḥ</i>	: Unity of teaching to be maintained
<i>Seṣa</i>	: An entity meant only for service with no tinge of selfishness
<i>Śeṣatva</i>	: Servitude
<i>Śankha</i>	: Conch
<i>Seva</i>	: Service
<i>Satya</i>	: Truth
<i>Sandhya Performance</i>	: Ritual or prayer performed during dawn, mid-day and sundown
<i>Sātvika</i>	: Pure knowledge
<i>Samsāra</i>	: Cycle of birth and death
<i>Śrī Vaiṣṇava</i>	: The followers of Śrī Viṣṇu, the Absolute of the merciful master
<i>Śattu</i>	: Wear
<i>Sattya</i>	: Stamina
<i>Sattadār</i>	: Non-users (those who do not wear sacred thread)
<i>Śarīra</i>	: Body
<i>Sādhana</i>	: Means
<i>Sthira</i>	: A steady source
<i>Śennel</i>	: Paddy
<i>Strappu</i>	: Function
<i>Sthānikas</i>	: Local officials, official retinue
<i>Sampradāya</i>	: Tradition
<i>Tiru-k-kulattār</i>	: A clan belonging to the family of Śrī the Consort of Lord (Goddess Lakshmi)
<i>Tolukku-Iniyan</i>	: The deity borne on the shoulder produces a sense of thrill

<i>Tirumaṇ</i>	: The holy clay paste
<i>Tamas</i>	: Lethargy
<i>Tri-Varṇikas</i>	: Pertaining to three castes
<i>Tahdiyārādhanā</i>	: Social worship
<i>Tapas</i>	: Penance
<i>Talasi</i>	: Basil leaf
<i>Tiruvaimoḷi</i>	: The divine out burst in Tamil
<i>Tyāga</i>	: Sacrifice, renunciation
<i>Tīrivar</i>	: The straying or vagrant
<i>Tīru</i>	: Śrī
<i>Toṇḍanūr</i>	: The city of devotees
<i>Toṇḍar</i>	: Devotee
<i>Tenkalei</i>	: The obligation minded
<i>Tēngu</i>	: Coconut, a tropical palm tree
<i>Tirunakṣtra</i>	: Birth day
<i>Tuḷḷum</i>	: Drive
<i>Unchavṛthi</i>	: Begging alms
<i>Upakaraṇa</i>	: Instrument
<i>Upasaka</i>	: Meditator
<i>Ubhayavedānta</i>	: The twin system of Vedāntic thought
<i>Upasana</i>	: Observation
<i>Unaṇṇu</i>	: A mental entity
<i>Vāhana</i>	: Vehicle
<i>Varṇadharmā</i>	: Caste based obligation
<i>Vidhisodhaka Kinkara</i>	: A servant whose function it is to keep the path cleared of the accumulated garbage
<i>Vaidika</i>	: Pertaining to the vedas (also the follower of vedic style of living)
<i>Vedas</i>	: The ritual delineation
<i>Vedānta</i>	: The final phase of wisdom
<i>Vinaya</i>	: Humility
<i>Vānaprastha</i>	: The seeker after secluded resort
<i>Vaikhāṇasa</i>	: System of temple worship which owes its origin to the vedas
<i>Vedāntin</i>	: Philosopher
<i>Vaḍakalai</i>	: Privilege minded
<i>Viśiṣṭhadvaita</i>	: Comprehensive Absolutism
<i>Vyayasāya</i>	: Firmness

<i>Varna Dharma</i>	: Caste discipline
<i>Vellals</i>	: Agricultural community
<i>Vasundhara</i>	: The container of wealth in its common conception as food
<i>Vālai</i>	: Plantain
<i>Vaṭṭu</i>	: Bachelor
<i>Vidyāmadha</i>	: A conceit intellectual arrogance or the competence to explain any and every aspect of experience
<i>Vellai Śattu-p-padi</i>	: Wearing the white robes
<i>Yāgas</i>	: Ritual
<i>Yagñas</i>	: Ceremonies
<i>Yajña</i>	: Observe the ritual
<i>Yājana</i>	: Direct the performance

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